The Right Reverend
EDW: STILLINGFLEET D.D.
Lord Bishop of Worcester.

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THIRTEEN SERMONS

Preached on

Several Occasions.

Three of which never before Printed

By the Right Reverend Father in God *EDWARD* Lord Bishop of *Worcester.*

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SERMON I.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL,

February *the* 19th, 168⅘.

St. Luke XV. 18.

I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.

IN the foregoing Verse, we find the Prodigal Son so far awakened and *come to himself*, as to be sensible of the miserable Condition he had brought himself into by his own folly and wickedness. But, before he came to this, there is a remarkable Turn in

the Course of his Life, set down by our Saviour in the beginning of this excellent Parable. For, he was first very impatient of being under the wise Conduct of his Father, and thought he could manage his own Affairs far more to his Contentment and Satisfaction, if he were but permitted to use his Liberty, and were not so strictly tyed up to the grave and formal Methods of living, observed and required in his Father's House. Which might pass for Wisdom in Age, and be agreeable enough to such whose Life and Vigour were decayed; and who were now to maintain their Authority over their Children by seeming to be so much wiser than they: But it is a rare thing for Youth and Age to agree in the Opinion of Wisdom: For it is not the Care, the Experience, the Judgment of a wise and tender Father, that can allay the Heats, or calm the Passions, or over-rule the violent Inclinations of Youth; but whatever it cost them afterwards, some will be still trying the Experiment, whether it doth not more conduce to the happiness of Life to pursue their own Fancies and Designs, than to hearken to another's Directi-

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ons (though a Father's) whoſe Circumſtances are ſo much different from their own. Thus our Bleſſed Saviour repreſents in the Parable this young Prodigal, as weary of being rich and eaſie at Home, and fond of ſeeing the Pleaſures of the World: and therefore nothing would ſatisfie him unleſs he were intruſted with the Stock which was intended for him, that he might ſhew the difference between his Father's Conduct and his own.

And this very ſoon appear'd; for this hopefull Manager had not been long abroad, *but he waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living.* And to make him the more ſenſible of his Folly, there happened a more than ordinary Scarcity, which made his low and exhauſted Condition more uneaſie to him. But the Senſe of Shame was yet greater with him than that of his Folly; and whatever ſhifts he underwent, he would by no means yet think of returning home; but rather choſe to ſubmit to the meaneſt and baſeſt Employment in hopes to avoid the Neceſſity of it. But at laſt, Reaſon and Conſideration began to work upon him, which is called, *his coming to himſelf:*

and then he takes up a Reſolution to go home to his Father, and to throw himſelf at his Feet, to confeſs his fault ingenuouſly and freely, and to beg pardon for his former Folly, in hopes of Forgiveneſs and Reconciliation. *I will ariſe and go to my Father, and ſay to him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee.*

Under this Parable, our Saviour ſets forth the ſtate of a Sinner, (1.) In his wilfull degeneracy from God, his Father, both by Creation and Providence; his uneaſineſs under his juſt and holy Laws; his impatience of being reſtrained by them; his caſting off the Bonds of Duty to him; and running into all kind of Diſorders without regard to God, or his own Soul. (2.) In the diſſatisfaction he found in his evil Courſes; being very much diſappointed in the great Expectations he had in the Pleaſures of Sin; waſting his health, intereſt, reputation, eſtate, and above all, the Peace and Tranquillity of his Mind, which was more valuable than any other Delight whatſoever, and he now found impoſſible to be enjoy'd in a Courſe of Rebellion againſt his heavenly Father. (3.) In the Conviction of

of his Folly upon due Conſideration of what he had done; which is Emphatically called *Coming to himſelf*; having before acted ſo much below himſelf, and againſt himſelf; unworthy of the Relation he ſtands in to God; of thoſe Faculties he had beſtow'd upon him; and of thoſe hopes and expectations he might have had from him either as to this or another World. (4.) In the Reſolution he takes upon this Conviction, no longer to delay his purpoſe of repenting and returning home, but to embrace the preſent opportunity of doing it freely, heartily and ingenuouſly, *I will ariſe and go to my Father*, &c.

Having formerly in this Place, and on a like Occaſion conſidered the prodigal Son's *coming to himſelf*, I ſhall now purſue the Method of his Repentance in the *Reſolution* he here takes *to ariſe and go to his Father*, &c.

And therein I ſhall enquire into theſe things,

I. What grounds a Sinner hath to incourage him to repent; or to form ſuch a Reſolution in his Mind *that he will ariſe and go to his Father*, when he knows he hath ſo much provoked and offended him.

II. How neceſſary it is in order to true Repentance to form a fixed and ſteady Reſolution to go through with it, *I will ariſe and go*, &c.

First, What grounds a Sinner hath to incourage him to repent; or to make Application to his Father in order to Forgiveneſs, ſince he is convinced he hath ſo juſtly offended him. For, if we conſider the Circumſtances here mention'd, he had no ſuch Reaſon to hope to be receiv'd into Favour upon ſuch eaſie Terms, as are here expreſſed; For,

(1.) He had wilfully forſaken his Father's Houſe, without any juſt Cauſe of Complaint of any hard uſage there.

(2.) He had embraced ſuch a Courſe of Life, which he knew was diſpleaſing to him, living riotouſly and diſorderly, in a way contrary to his Will.

(3.) He never thought of returning home, till mere Neceſſity forced him; till Hunger and Poverty made him *come to himſelf*.

And what could be more diſobliging to a Father, than ſuch Circumſtances as theſe?

(1.) His

(1.) His Father never forced him from home, nor made his Condition uneaſie there. Our Saviour here repreſents Almighty God, as dealing with Mankind like a tender and indulgent Father, and not like a ſevere and hard Maſter; his Laws being intended for our Good, and not for his own Advantage. There is no Duty of ours towards God, or our ſelves, or others, but is founded on this Relation to God as a Father to Mankind. Nothing can be more reaſonable in general than that the Father ſhould order and direct his Children, and give ſuch Rules which are fitting for them to obſerve; And if we examine the particular Laws of Nature, or the Dictates of Reaſon as to Good and Evil, we ſhall find them very agreeable to God's Paternal Government.

What is the Duty of Prayer to God, but asking daily Bleſſing of our heavenly Father? What is our Thankſgiving, but a ſolemn owning his Paternal Care and Bounty towards us? And in theſe two, the main Duties of Natural Religion conſiſt. The Neglect whereof, is ſuch a diſreſpect to our heavenly Father, as is not conſiſtent

with our believing him to be so. For, as God himself argues in the Prophet, Malac. 1. 6. *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master: If then I be a Father, where is mine Honour? And if I be a Master, where is my Fear?* God was a Father by the Right of Creation and Providence: but he was a Master to the *Jews* in respect of the Bondage of the Law; and as there was a Spirit of Bondage on that account in them, which inclined them to a more servile Fear; so there ought to have been a natural Spirit of Adoption toward God as their Supreme Creatour and Father; which should excite all Men to such a dutifull Love, such a reverential Esteem, such a Mixture of Awe and Kindness as is in Children towards their Parents. Yea, it ought to be much greater than that can be supposed; because the Distance is Infinite between God and us; and our Dependence more immediate and necessary; and there is in him a Concurrence of all Perfections, which may cause in us the highest Esteem, and the humblest Adoration. There is an unquestionable Duty owing by Children to their Heb. 12. 9. Πολλῷ μᾶλλον. earthly Parents, *but how much rather* (saith the Apostle) *ought we to be in subjection*

ſubjection to the Father of Spirits? The Fathers of our Fleſh may be very Kind, but not Wiſe in their Love; or Wiſe and not ſo Kind; or they may be both Wiſe and Kind, but not able to help their Children. They may love and pity, and pray for them, when they are in Miſery, or Sickneſs and Pain, but after all, they are unable to relieve them; For the moſt indulgent Father, when his bowels yearn, and his heart is ready to break at the ſight of a Child lying under the Agonies of Death, is not able to give a Moments Reſpite to the terrible Pangs, which he can neither behold nor abate. But our heavenly Father hath not only Infinite Wiſdom, but Infinite Kindneſs and Power; and where all theſe are joined together, what Honour, what Love, what Fear is due unto him! Although there be defects in their Parents, yet Children are ſtill bound to obey them, and to ſhew a mighty Regard and Reverence towards them; but here it is ſo much otherwiſe, that if we could conceive our ſelves without this Relation to God, yet his Perfections are ſo many, ſo great, ſo infinite, as to deſerve and require our utmoſt Veneration,

on. The prodigal Son could then have no Reaſon to complain of the Duty which he owed to his Father.

And was it not fit for him to appoint the Orders of his Family, and to expect that his Children ſhould behave themſelves therein, as became the Relation they ſtood in to himſelf and to one another? That they ſhould have a decent Regard to themſelves in Sobriety, Temperance, Command of their Paſſions, and Care of their Words; That they ſhould behave themſelves towards their Brethren with Sincerity, Kindneſs and Juſtice; which comprehend all the Duties we owe to one another?

And what now was there in all this, that the Prodigal could have any Cauſe to complain of, or that ſhould make his Father's Houſe ſo uneaſie to him? But his Father had juſt Cauſe to be provoked, when his wiſe Counſels, and prudent Care, and conſtant Kindneſs, and righteous Government were ſo much ſlighted and deſpiſed by a diſobedient and ungratefull Son; who had ſo little Senſe of his Duty or his Intereſt as to be weary of being ſo well at home, and therefore impatiently deſiring to

find

find out new Methods of living well, as he then thought, when the beſt Orders of his Father's Family were become ſo diſpleaſing to him.

(2.) But what were theſe new and fine Contrivances for his own happineſs? He began to ſuſpect his wiſe Father did not allow his Children liberty enough at home, and that he concealed from him the great Myſtery of the Happineſs of Life, and therefore concluded, that if he did give way to thoſe Deſires which he found to be natural, but his Father thought unreaſonable, he ſhould enjoy much more Pleaſure and Satisfaction than he did at home. And being reſolved upon this, he gives way to thoſe Inclinations he found ſtrongeſt in himſelf, denies himſelf no Pleaſures of Life, accounts Vertue but a Name which ſowre and moroſe Perſons put upon their own humours; and Religion but a Device for Fools to deceive themſelves, and Knaves to deceive others by. And ſo he throws off all checks and reſtraints upon himſelf, and never regards the Good or Evil of what he doth, for his Luſts are his Laws, and the ſatisfaction of them he now looks upon as the only real Happineſs of Mankind. And

And could any thing be ſuppoſed more provoking to his heavenly Father than ſuch a wicked and diſſolute way of living? So contrary to his Father's Will, to his own Reaſon, Conſcience, Intereſt, Reputation; and which ſoon brought him to Shame and Miſery?

(3.) But that which added yet more to the height of the Provocation was, that he did not think of returning home to his Father, upon the firſt apprehenſion of his own Folly; but he reſolved to undergo any difficulty, and ſubmit to any hardſhip, rather than do what was neceſſary in order to Reconciliation with his Father.

How hard a Matter then is it to bring an habitual Sinner to Repentance! It is not eaſie to bring him to any due and ſerious Conviction of the Evil of his doings; but it is far more difficult to change the inward Diſpoſition of the Mind, and to alter all the great Deſigns and Pleaſures of Life. It is but a mean Notion of Repentance which is apt to prevail in the World, as though it implied no more than ſome Acts of Contrition for greater Sins, when the Habit and Diſpoſition remain the ſame.

But

But true Repentance is the turn of the whole Soul from the Love, as well as the Practice of Sin; and this is not a thing to be done eaſily or ſuddenly; a Sinner will bear a great many Checks and Reproofs of Conſcience before he will part with his beloved Sins; he will ſtruggle a great while with himſelf; and endure many Conflicts between an awaken'd Conſcience and rooted Inclinations, before the penitent Sinner can aſſure himſelf that his Repentance hath had its due and effectual operation upon him. For we ſee here nothing but extremity brought the Prodigal to himſelf, and made him at laſt to reſolve *to ariſe and go to his Father*, &c. As *Themiſtocles* ſaid of the People of *Athens*, they did by him, as Men commonly do by a great Tree, they run to it for ſhelter in a Storm, but care not how they uſe it another Time; that is too true of Sinners with reſpect to God; when they can make a ſhift for themſelves any other Way, they deſpiſe Religion; and make God their Refuge only at a day of Extremity, but not their Choice, when their Conditions pleaſe them.

Ælian. *var. hiſt. l.* 9. *c.* 18.

But

But when the prodigal Son had ſo ſlighted his Father, broken his Commands, deſpiſed the Advantages he had at home, and was ſo hardly brought to think of returning thither, how came he now to be ſo incouraged in his Mind *to ariſe and go to his Father*, and confeſs his fault with hopes of being forgiven after all this?

We find no other Account here given, but that he was *his Father*, however he had offended him; and therefore he was reſolved he would *ariſe and go to his Father*; as though there were charms and force enough in that word to anſwer all Diſcouragements. Which being an Argument taken from the Bowels of Pity and Compaſſion which a Father hath towards a relenting Child, we muſt enquire, how far this will hold with reſpect to God, who is ſo infinitely above all the fond Paſſions of humane Nature, that it is a diminution to his Glory and Majeſty to be thought like to Mankind; and therefore *his thoughts*
Iſa. 55 8, 9. *and ways are ſaid to be as far above ours as the Heavens are above the Earth?*

To clear this, we are to conſider, not only that our Bleſſed Saviour doth here lay the force and weight of the Parable

ble upon the tenderneſs of a Father to his Son; but that he elſewhere argues from it in ſuch a manner as to convince us that God hath far greater Pity and Compaſſion towards Mankind when they make due Applications to him, than Fathers can have towards their Children even when they ask for neceſſary Suſtenance. *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask bread, will he give him a ſtone? Or, if he ask a fiſh, will he give him a ſerpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your Children, How much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Matth. 7. 9, 10, 11. There have been Philoſophers ſo ſevere againſt the Paſſions of humane Nature, that they would not allow any Pity or Commiſeration towards others, whatever their Condition or Relation were, but only acting according to Reaſon in ſupplying their Wants. But the Chriſtian Religion doth far more reaſonably allow ſuch Paſſions in Mankind as diſpoſe them to do good to others, by fixing ſuch an impreſſion on their Minds of others Miſery as doth excite them to do what is fitting for their Eaſe and Support. And Compaſſion is not,

not, as ſome imagine, ſuch a mean and ſelfiſh Paſſion, as doth ariſe only from the Apprehenſion that we may ſuffer the ſame things our ſelves, which we pity others for; but it is a generous Senſe of what others feel, joined with a Readineſs to help them according to our Power. And in this Senſe, our Saviour not only allows it in Fathers towards Children, but looks on it as neceſſary in humane Nature in order to the good and advantage of Mankind; and therefore himſelf taking our Na-

Heb. 4. 15. 5. 2. ture upon him is ſaid *to be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities; and to have compaſſion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way.*

But although this be allowable in humane Nature, how can ſuch a thing as Compaſſion be attributed to the Divine Nature which is uncapable of ſuch impreſſions and motions, which we are ſubject to?

And yet the Scripture is very full and clear in attributing Pity and Compaſſion to Almighty God with reſpect to his Creatures. The Pſalmiſt ſaith,

Pſ. 103. 8. *The Lord is full of Compaſſion and Mercy; long-ſuffering, and of great Goodneſs.*

Jam. 5. 11. St. *James* ſaith, *He is very pitifull, and of*

of tender Mercy. And in that wonderfull Appearance to *Moſes*, when God himſelf declared his own Attributes, the greateſt part conſiſts of his Kindneſs and Mercy towards Mankind; *The Lord God, mereifull and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for thouſands, forgiving Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin.* And the Pſalmiſt uſeth the very ſame ſimilitude of a Father's Pity to his Children, *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* And when the Prophet ſpeaks of God's thoughts and ways being ſo much above Man's, it is for this end to prove thereby that God may ſhew more pity to Mankind, than they find in their hearts to ſhew to one another. *Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon; For my thoughts are not your thoughts*, &c. But ſetting aſide all this, the whole Scheme of the Goſpel is drawn upon the Suppoſition of God's Pity and Compaſſion towards penitent Sinners; which is the Reaſon our Saviour inſiſts ſo much on the Proof of it in this whole Chapter. Wherein we not only read of *Joy in*

Exod. 34. 6, 7.

Pſ. 103. 13.

Iſ. 55. 7.

v. 7. 10.

Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner; but the Compaſſion of God Almighty towards a penitent Sinner is ſet forth with all the tenderneſs of an indulgent Father running into the Embraces of his Son, when he ſaw him at a diſtance coming towards him.

What now is the meaning of all this? Are we to conceive of God as one like to our ſelves, who either do not ſee faults in thoſe we love; or do not hate them, as we ſhould do; or are too apt to paſs them over; or are at firſt, it may be, apt to be angry upon a ſlight provocation, and then as eaſily made Friends upon as little Reaſon as we were made Angry? But none of theſe things ought to enter into our Minds concerning God with reſpect to the Follies of Mankind.

And in this Caſe, if we will form in our Minds right and true Conceptions of the Divine Nature (as we ought to do) we muſt have a great Care leſt we attribute any thing to God, which looks like Weakneſs and Imperfection, as the Motions and Changes of Paſſions do; therefore to underſtand his Pity and Compaſſion, and Reconciliation to penitent Sinners, we muſt firſt know

know what his Anger and Displeasure against Sinners mean.

Some think that *Epicurus* did in earnest believe a God, but he was therefore forced to deny Providence, because he could not conceive that the Government of the World could be managed without such resentments as were inconsistent with the complete Happiness of the Divine Being; and therefore he rather chose to make him careless and easie, than active and liable to Passion. The *Stoicks* attributed to God all that was good and kind and obliging; but would by no means endure that ever he should be said to be angry or displeased; which Doctrine did in effect overthrow Providence with respect to moral Actions, as much as the *Epicureans*. For if God did not regard the difference of Men's Actions, but was equally kind to them whether they did good or evil, such a Providence would have as little influence on Men's Lives as if there were none at all. We must then suppose, if we would uphold Religion and Morality in the World, not only that there is a Providence, but that God hath a different regard to Men according to the Good or Evil of

Lact. de Ira Dei, c. 4.

their Actions. The Regard he hath to Men for being good and doing good is called his *Love*, his *Kindneſs*, his *Good-will*, his *Grace* and *Favour*; that which he hath to things that are Evil is called his Hatred; that which he hath to Perſons for doing Evil is his *Anger*, *Wrath*, *Diſpleaſure*, *Indignation*; according to the different Nature and Circumſtances of their evil Actions.

But in order to the preventing any falſe or mean Apprehenſions of the Divine Nature, when the Paſſions of Mankind are attributed to it, we muſt conſider theſe two things;

(1.) That we muſt by no means attribute to God any thing that is unreaſonable in our ſelves; ſuch are all irregular Motions, which we call violent Paſſions, ariſing from Surprize, Miſtake, Inadvertency, Weakneſs, or corrupt Inclination. But ſetting all theſe aſide, the original Paſſions of Mankind, which are agreeable to Reaſon, are no other than what ariſe from an Inclination to what we judge to be good, and an Averſion from what we apprehend to be evil; which holds as to the Divine Nature.

(2.) That

(2.) That there is an observable Difference in the very Nature of some Passions, which imply a Repugnancy in themselves to the Divine Perfections, which others do not. For Love and Kindness, and Joy, and inward Satisfaction have nothing in them supposing their Object good, but what agrees with the Divine Nature; but the Passions contrary to these, as Envy, Ill-will and Revenge are not only repugnant as Passions, but in their own Nature; for God cannot envy the Good of his Creatures, nor bear ill-will to them as such, nor take pleasure in their Torments. And of this Nature *Anger* properly taken is, as it doth imply a present Disorder and Disturbance within, from the Apprehension of some Injury done or intended, with a Desire of Revenge on those who do it; all which is inconsistent with the necessary Perfections of God; for they argue Meanness, Imperfection and Mutability.

We must therefore fix on such a Notion of Anger as becomes the Almighty Wisdom and Goodness; and that lies in,

(1.) A Displeasure against the Sinner on the account of his Sins; for God cannot have any Complacency in those

who displease him as all Sinners do, whether they design it or not.

(2.) A Will to punish Sinners according to their Demerits; which being according to the Rules of Wisdom and Righteous Government, cannot be said to argue an indecent Passion.

(3.) The actual Execution of his Justice upon great Provocations. And so God is said to be angry when he punishes; especially when he doth it suddenly and severely; as Men in their Passion are wont to do. But whatever God doth in this kind, he doth it with the Wisdom and Temper of a Judge, and not with the Fury or Passion of an angry Being.

And there is nothing in all this unbecoming the Divine Nature, but very agreeable thereto. And this is all which in strictness of Reason is understood by God's being *angry* with Mankind. For we must never imagine that God acts according to sudden Heats and Passions; but whatever he doth is according to the Counsels of infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

I do not deny that the Scripture doth represent *Anger* in God as if it were a Passion raised upon great Provocation, and

and capable of being laid by Submiſſion and true Repentance. Thence we read, of *God's Wrath waxing hot, of his Anger kindling againſt his People, and his turning away from his fierce Anger,* and many ſuch Expreſſions; but ſo we read of the *Fire* of his *Indignation,* the *Sword* of his *Wrath,* the *Stretching forth of his Hand;* which all grant are not to be literally underſtood. If then in theſe Expreſſions, the Perfections of the Divine Nature are to be our Rule, according to which we muſt interpret them, becauſe the literal ſence implies an incongruity to the Divine Perfections which are all wholly Spiritual; then from the ſame Reaſon we muſt remove all Perturbations from it which are as inconſiſtent with the abſolute Perfection of it, as *Eyes* and *Ears* and *Hands* and *Feet* are, although they are all mention'd in Scripture. Exod. 32. 10. Iſa. 5. 26. Jon. 3. 9.

From whence we juſtly infer, that there is a wonderfull Condeſcention to the ordinary Capacities and common Apprehenſions of Mankind in the Language of Scripture, concerning the Divine Nature, which makes deeper impreſſions on meaner underſtandings, and thoſe who are of finer thoughts will ſee

cause to attribute only such a Sense of things relating to God, as is consistent with his Infinite and Divine Perfections.

But what now shall we say to this Tenderness and Compassion of God towards penitent Sinners? Can he be moved by our Trouble and Sorrow and Acts of Contrition for our Sins? If we be righteous what doth it profit the Almighty? And if we be evil, how can it hurt him? And if when we have sinned, we repent, we do no more than is fitting for us; but why should we imagine the Great and Wise God should have Compassion upon us, when we become sensible of our own Folly? For when we sin against God, wilfully, deliberately, knowingly, habitually, we do what lies in us to provoke him to Wrath and Indignation against us; we reject his wise Government, we slight his righteous Laws, we prefer the pleasing our corrupt Inclinations and sensual Lusts before our heavenly Father. And what can be more provoking to him than to be so despised by one who had his Being and all the Comforts of Life from him?

Sup-

Suppoſe now ſuch a diſobedient, rebellious Son, as here in the Parable, be made ſenſible of his Folly, is his Father bound to receive him? Was it not his own choice to go from him? If he hath ſuffered by his Folly, he may thank himſelf for it; and if his Father lets him alone in it, he hath no cauſe to complain.

But ſuch was the Tenderneſs of the Father towards his repenting Son, that he ſhew'd the greateſt Compaſſion imaginable; for he did not ſtay at home expecting his Son's ſolemn Submiſſion before his Family, but *he ran towards him, and fell upon his Neck, and kiſſed him.*

What Conceptions now ought we to have of God's Compaſſion towards penitent Sinners anſwerable to all this? This I ſhall endeavour to clear in theſe Particulars.

(1.) That God's hatred is not primarily againſt Perſons who are his Creatures; but againſt that which is evil, which is none of his making; and againſt Perſons only ſo far as they are corrupted with Evil. *Thou loveſt Righteouſneſs, and hateſt Wickedneſs,* ſaith the Pſalmiſt. God hates nothing for its Pſal. 45. 7.

its own sake, but Sin; and for the sake
Ps. 5. 5. of that *he hates all Workers of Iniquity.*

(2.) There may be Good-will towards the Person of a Sinner at the same time when God discovers the hatred of his Sins. I do not say, God takes any Pleasure in him while he goes on in Sin, for that is against the Eternal Rules of Righteousness in God; but that he may have so much Good-will towards him, as to design to reduce him from his evil Ways. And this every Father finds in himself towards a disobedient Son; while he hates his evil Courses, yet he would make use of the best Methods to bring him to himself, and to his Duty. And upon this
Tit. 3. 4. is grounded that *Love and Kindness of God towards Mankind*, in sending his Son to be our Saviour, and all the Promises and Invitations which are made to Sinners in the Doctrine of the Gospel.

(3.) It is very agreeable to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness for God to shew himself full of Pity and Compassion towards penitent Sinners, *i. e.* so as to forgive them their former Sins, and to receive them into his Favour. For Pity and

and Compaſſion in God is to be judged, not according to the inward Motions we find in our ſelves, but according to theſe two things.

(1.) A readineſs to do good to his Creatures according to their Neceſſities. Which being in general, is his *Bounty* and *Goodneſs*; but conſidered with reſpect to the Perſons of Sinners, it is his *Clemency*, or readineſs to forgive; and with reſpect to the *Puniſhment* they deſerve by their Sins, it is his *Mercy* and *Pity*: Which in us is *Ægritudo ex Miſeriâ alterius*, and therefore called *Miſericordia*, becauſe the Heart is touched with the Senſe of another's Miſery; but we are not ſo to apprehend it in God; but that ſuch is the Goodneſs of God towards repenting Sinners, that he is as willing to ſhew Mercy as they are to repent.

(2.) God's Pity and Compaſſion lies in the proper Effects of it; which here in the Caſe of the Prodigal were, paſſing by his former Extravagances, and receiving him into as much Favour as if he had not gone aſtray. *This my Son* v. 24. 32. *was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found.* Thoſe who think, they ſtand not in need of ſo much pardoning

Mercy

Mercy as others do, are apt to repine at the Favour shew'd to great Sinners when they repent; and therefore the Elder Brother could not bear the expressing so much kindness towards such a disobedient Son, though now a Penitent. But that there is nothing disagreeing to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness in such Compassion towards penitent Sinners, will more fully appear, if we consider,

(1.) That God is not bound to deal with Sinners according to the utmost Rigour and Severity of his Justice. Because he is under no fatal Necessity; no superiour Law; and therefore may act freely in the forgiving Offenders as seems best to his Infinite Wisdom. The whole Race of Mankind is a perpetual Evidence that God doth not act according to the strictness of his Justice, for *if he had dealt with them after their Sins, or rewarded them according to their Iniquities; their Spirits would have failed before him, and the Souls which he had made*; they had been long since destroy'd from the Face of the Earth, and not suffer'd to continue in their Provocations. But God hath not only forborn Sinners long when he might justly have

have punished them; but he gives them many real Blessings and Comforts of Life, freely and bountifully. Now if God deal so mercifully with Sinners while they continue such, is there not greater Reason to suppose he will be far more so, when they cease to be such?

(2.) A penitent Sinner doth what in him lies to vindicate God's Honour. I do not say, he can make Satisfaction to Divine Justice; for that is impossible for him to do; and God hath provided for that by his own Son, whom he hath made *a Propitiation for the Sins of the World*. But a true Penitent takes all the Shame and Dishonour to himself; he clears the Justice of God's Government, and the Equity of his Laws, and owns himself guilty of unspeakable Folly in his Disobedience. "O how "justly, saith he, might God have ta- "ken me away in the midst of my "Sins, when my Conscience checked "me for my Sins, and yet I had no "heart to repent of them! When I "could not but see my danger, and "yet was unwilling to come out of it. "I can never be sufficiently thankfull "for so great a Mercy as his bringing

"me

" me to my self hath been; I had gone
" on in the same secure, stupid, sense-
" less Condition, that others lie in, if
" he had not throughly awaken'd me,
" and roused me out of my impenitent
" State. How dreadfull had my Con-
" dition for ever been, if my first awa-
" kening had been in the Flames of
" Hell? Nothing but infinite Goodness
" and Patience would have waited so
" long for the Repentance of such an
" Offender as I have been. I have sin-
" ned so often, that I am ashamed to
" think of the Number of my Trans-
" gressions; so deeply, that I am con-
" founded at the thoughts of them; so
" foolishly, that I am unworthy to be
" called thy Son, who have acted so
" unlike thy Children (so the prodi-
" gal Son here speaks to his Father.)
" And if thou wouldst admit me but
" to the meanest Condition of thy Ser-
" vants, I shall ever esteem it as the
" greatest Privilege of my Life, and
" endeavour to serve Thee for the fu-
" ture tho' in the lowest Capacity. Thus
the repenting Prodigal goes on, *v* 19.
And in a suitable Manner every true
Penitent behaves himself towards God
with great Humility, and a deep Sense

of

of his own Unworthiness; and is thereby rendred more capable of Divine Favour. *For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* And therefore it is very agreeable to infinite Wisdom and Goodness to shew pity towards a truly humble and penitent Sinner; *For a broken and contrite heart he will not despise.* Jam. 4. 6. Ps. 51. 17.

(3.) If God were not so full of Compassion to penitent Sinners, there would have been no incouragement for Sinners to repent; but they must have sunk into everlasting Despair. For if God should forgive none that Sin, then all Mankind must be condemned to Eternal Misery; for *all have sinned*; and *there is not a just Man upon Earth who sinneth not*; and so the best and worst, and all sorts of Sinners must here suffer together; which would have taken away all the Notion of any such thing as Mercy and Clemency in God towards Mankind. But if we set bounds to it as to some particular kinds and degrees of sinning; we limit that which is infinite; we determine what we know not, *viz.* how far God's Mercy doth extend; we destroy the Power of Divine Grace in changing and reforming Rom. 3. 23. Eccl. 7. 20.

ming the worſt of Men. But the Scripture hath recorded ſome remarkable Inſtances of great Sinners, who have been great Penitents, and upon that have been pardon'd (ſuch as *Manaſſes*, and ſome others) that no penitent Sinner might be diſcouraged in the Work of Repentance. For a true Penitent ſearching to the bottom, and ſetting all his Sins before him, with their ſeveral Aggravations, can be kept from Deſpair by nothing leſs than the Infinite Mercy of God to thoſe who truly repent.

(4.) Becauſe there is nothing ſo provoking in Sin, as obſtinate Impenitency, and Continuance in it.

It is true, God hates all Sin for its own ſake; but not all equally; ſome Sins being of a higher Nature than others are; being againſt plainer Light, ſtronger Convictions, more eaſie Commands, ſtricter Obligations than others are; but yet it is the Temper of a Sinner's Mind, which is moſt provoking, when Sins are committed, not through Infirmity, or ſudden Surprize, or a violent Temptation; but habitually, knowingly, wilfully; eſpecially when they are done in Contempt of God and his Laws, and with an obſtinate Reſolution

to

to continue in the Practice of them. This is ſo provoking to God, that the chief Reaſon of the ſevere Puniſhments of Sinners in another World is taken from thence; becauſe God hates obſtinate and impenitent Sinners. *And thus he will by no means acquit the Guilty.* Exod. 34. 7. 1 John 5. 16, 17. *There is a Sin unto death,* ſaith St. *John, and there is a Sin not unto death.* There is a Sin unto death, which *Chriſt* hath ſaid he will never pardon; and that is *blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt*; a Sin which none who do truly own Chriſtianity, are capable of committing. Matth. 12. 32.

But is there then no *Sin unto death* to them? Yes, it is poſſible for Men who have clear Convictions in their minds of the Truth of the Goſpel, to act ſo plainly, and wilfully, and directly againſt it, as either to provoke God to take them away by an extraordinary Judgment, and ſo it is properly *a Sin unto death*; or to withdraw his Grace from them, and leave them to the hardneſs of their own Hearts, and ſo it becomes a Sin unto a Spiritual death. But beſides theſe Caſes; every wilfull Sinner who adds Impenitency to his Sin, commits *the Sin unto death*; becauſe there is no other Condition of Pardon

allow'd by the Goſpel without true Repentance.

How infinite is the Goodneſs of God that excludes no Sinners from the hopes of Pardon who have a heart to repent ſincerely of their Sins! And how juſt is God in the final Puniſhment of thoſe Sinners, who ſtill go on in their Sins, and refuſe to repent; after all the Invitations and Incouragements which are given them to that End! Can we in Reaſon ſuppoſe that God ſhould ſtoop lower towards Sinners, than to offer them pardon of formet Sins, if they do repent; and to tell them they muſt expect no Mercy in another World if they do not repent?

But ſuppoſe we are come thus far, that we are convinced we muſt repent, what Courſe and Method muſt we take in order to it? Of this briefly, and ſo to conclude.

Secondly, I know no better than to follow the Example of the prodigal Son here: And in the firſt place to form a preſent, ſincere, fixed and peremptory Reſolution of doing it; *I will ariſe and go to my Father*, &c. If we ſuffer Convictions to cool upon our Minds, the force

force and ſpirit of them will ſoon be gone. It hath been of late obſerved by the ſtricteſt Enquirers into Nature, that the beginnings of Life are very ſmall, and hardly diſcernible. It is but as a ſpark that appears, and may eaſily be exſtinguiſhed; but if it be incouraged by a continual heat, a wonderfull Alteration ſoon follows, and the diſtinct parts begin to be formed; the firſt which is diſcerned is the Eye, but the Fountain of Life is in the Heart; and when the Courſe of the Bloud is there ſetled, the other parts come to their due formation with greater quickneſs. This may be a Repreſentation of the firſt Beginnings of Spiritual Life, that which anſwers to the Eye is the Conviction of the Mind, where the inward Change firſt appears; that which anſwers to the Heart is *Reſolution*, and when that is fixed, a mighty Reformation will ſoon follow. But Spiritual Life as well as Natural is in its firſt Beginnings a very nice and tender thing, it may be eaſily ſtopt, and very hardly recovered: It is therefore of very great Concernment to keep up the Warmth of our firſt Reſolutions, and to improve them into a preſent Practice agreeable

Harv. Ex. 16, 17, 18.

thereto; as the prodigal Son here did, who when he had resolved upon it, *did* accordingly *arise and go to his Father*, v. 20.

I do not think there are many Persons in the World who have Convictions upon their Minds of the Evil of their Ways; but do resolve at one time or other before they die to repent of their Sins, and to make their Peace with God. But alas! these are *Ova subventanea*, they make a fair appearance, but there is no principle of Life in them; or as St. *Jude* expresses it, *they* Jud. v. 12. *are Clouds without Water*; of no Consistency, but *carried about with winds*; hurried to and fro with the force and power of Temptations; and then their Resolutions are like *the Vapours* St. *James* Jam. 4. 14. speaks of, *which appear for a little Time, and then vanish away. Trees they are without fruit*, as St. *Jude* goes on, Δένδρα φθινοπωρινὰ; not that make no shew or appearance of Fruit; but it hath no such firmness and substance in it as to endure the nipping Frosts, and so it drops off, and withers away. Just such are the Effects of faint and imperfect Resolutions, they never hold out long, and only aggravate the Sins committed

mitted after them. For every such Sin is a plain Sin against Conscience; or else they would never have made any Resolution against it. And those who continue to sin after Resolutions against their Sins, not only lose all the Peace and Comfort of their Minds, but make it much harder for them, either to make or trust their Resolutions again, and consequently to be satisfied of the Sincerity of their Repentance.

If we would then lay a sure Foundation for the Satisfaction of our Minds in a matter of such unconceivable Moment as the Truth of our Repentance is, let us call our selves to an Account as to this matter of the firm Purpose and Resolution of our Minds. Have we strictly examin'd our selves as to our particular Sins? For there is no Age, no Imployment, no Condition of Life but hath its Temptations belonging to it; which require not only our Care and Consideration, but Resolution to keep us from them. But suppose we have been overcome by *the Sin which doth so easily beset us*; the Work is harder to recover the Ground we have lost, than at first to maintain it; but if we have sinned, we must repent; and the

ſooner the better; but it is not to be done without awakening the drouſie and benummed Faculties of our Minds, and exerciſing the ſecret and hidden Powers therein. Not as though this were to be done without the Grace of God preventing and aſſiſting us; but becauſe *God worketh in us to will and to doe of his good Pleaſure*, we ought *to work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

Let us then trifle no longer in a Work we can never do too well, nor too ſoon; nor go about it with too much Reſolution. It is the want of this, which ruins ſuch a Number of thoſe who would fain go to Heaven, but have not Courage and Reſolution enough, to own their Repentance, and to break off their former Sins: They are half Penitents; they are inwardly troubled for them, and wiſh themſelves able to withſtand the next Temptation; but when it comes, they yield and ſuffer themſelves to be drawn away, *as a Bird haſteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* Now in ſuch Caſes, Reſolution is not only a convenient and proper thing; but a very wiſe thing. For, when once

Prov. 7. 23.

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a Reſolution is found to be ſerious, and in good earneſt, the former Companions in wickedneſs will leave off to ſolicit; and if once a penitent Sinner can endure to be deſpiſed, and expoſed for a time by evil Men for owning his Repentance, he will find the other parts of his Change grow more eaſie to him; and the Devil's Inſtruments in tempting will be like himſelf; *i. e.* they will give over tempting when they ſee no hopes to prevail. And let no Men ever complain that they want Power to break off their former Sins, till they have tried what the ſtrength of a Vigorous Reſolution will do. But becauſe we have always Reaſon to ſuſpect our ſelves, let us make our devout Applications to Almighty God to give us the Aſſiſtance of his Grace through the only Mediation of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*. *To whom*, &c.

SERMON II.

Scripture and *Tradition* COMPARED;

In a SERMON

Preached at

Guild-Hall-Chapel,

Novemb. *the* 27th 1687.

Coloſſ. II. 6.

As ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him.

THERE are two things obſervable in the manner of St. *Paul*'s expreſſing himſelf to the *Coloſſians* in this *Epiſtle*, 1. That

1. That he had a very good opinion of them at preſent, as appears by the foregoing Verſe. *For though I be abſent in the Fleſh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying, and beholding your order, and the ſtedfaſtneſs of your Faith in Chriſt.*

What could be ſaid more to the Advantage and Honour of a Chriſtian Church? For *Order* is the Strength and Beauty of any Society, uniting the ſeveral Parts to each other, and thereby preſerving and adorning the whole Body. And the more there is of this in any Chriſtian Church, the more it reſembles the Body of Chriſt, and the greater Honour it brings to the Chriſtian Profeſſion. Eſpecially, when it is joyned with a *ſtedfaſtneſs of Faith in Chriſt*, i. e. with a firm and well ſetled Reſolution to adhere to that Faith which Chriſt himſelf delivered. For the true Faith of Chriſt is not only the Mark which diſtinguiſhes, but the Soul which enlivens the Body of the Church, and by its Vigour and Influence makes the ſeveral Parts of it become the living Members of Chriſt's Body.

But if all this were ſeen by St. *Paul* in the Church of the *Coloſſians*, what need

need he to write so warmly and earnestly as he doth to them? Must we think, as some do, that he uses these Expressions as gentle *Methods of Insinuation*, and commends them for that, which he would perswade them to? But this doth not seem agreeable to the
2 Cor. 1. 12. Apostles *simplicity and godly sincerity*, which he elsewhere sets such a value upon. But it is far more probable that hitherto they had been very *orderly* and *stedfast*: But *Epaphras* going to St. *Paul* had informed him throughly of their condition, *viz.* That they were like a Garrison closely besieged on all sides; and although hitherto they had held out with great Courage, yet he did not know what earnest Sollicitations, and fair Promises, and tempting Motives might do with them, and therefore the Apostle writes this Epistle to encourage them in their *stedfastness*, and to warn them against Temptations. Which he doth in such a manner, as shews,

2. That he had a more than ordinary Apprehension of the danger they were in. *And this I say*, saith he, *lest any man should beguile you with enticing words*, v. 4. *And beware lest any man spoil you with Philosophy and vain deceit, after the*

the Traditions of men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ, v. 8. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of Angels*, &c. *v.* 18. All which expreſſions do imply, that he had juſt reaſon to fear and to give them caution in time, that while they did yet *think that they ſtood, they ſhould take heed leſt they fell.*

And this is that which the Apoſtle aims at in the words of the Text; *As ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him.*

Receiving Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, doth not here relate to his *Perſon*, but to his *Authority*, and to his *Doctrine*; ſo the Apoſtle himſelf explains it in the next Verſe, *Rooted and built up in him, and eſtabliſhed in the Faith, as ye have been taught.*

Walking in him is an Eaſtern-way of ſpeaking and ſuppoſes both an adhering to that Faith they had then received, and living according to it, looking on Chriſt and his Doctrine, as their *only way* to Heaven.

And as ye had received him, ſo walk ye in him, implies that the manner of their receiving Chriſt and his Doctrine

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at first was different from that which the false Apostles endeavoured to bring in among them, and that they were bound to keep close to that pure and primitive Doctrine which they at *first* received.

From hence we may consider a double Obligation lying upon them.

1. *To keep stedfast to that Faith which they first received*, without being seduced from it by the Arts of Deceivers, who were then busie among them.

2. *To live according to it*, by making that *Faith* the Principle of a Christian Life; and so *walking in him, as they have received him.*

1: As to the former, the Reasonableness of it cannot but appear from the supposition here made, *viz. that they had received Christ Jesus the Lord.*

For, thereby they declared, that *they received him as the Christ*, i. e. as him who was anointed of the Father to teach and instruct his Church; and therefore they were bound to adhere to his Doctrine; there being no other, whom *the Father hath sealed* and appointed to declare his Will; and *in him* Col. 2. 3. *were hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

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They received him *as Christ Jesus*, that is, they *hoped for Redemption thro' his Blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* And if their hopes of Heaven depended upon his Mediation, they had the greatest Reason to adhere only to him. Col. 1. 14.

They received him *as Christ Jesus the Lord*, and therefore they ought to submit to his Authority, to obey his Commands, and to observe his Institutions, and in all Circumstances of Life to keep stedfast to the Doctrine which he delivered.

But here arises the great Difficulty, how they should know by any certain Rule, what was the true and genuine Doctrine of Christ, which himself delivered? For,

1. The false Teachers among them pretended to deliver the true Doctrine of Christ as well as the Apostles.

2. That which they at first received was no certain Rule. For the false Teachers might have been before them. And first Possession gives no Title in Religion.

3. The *Apostle* doth not put the whole Trial meerly upon their Judgments or Memories, or Capacities; *viz.* What they thought, or remembred was

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at first taught them for the Doctrine of Christ.

For, it was very possible for them to have mistaken, or to have mis-remembred, what was at first delivered.

Nothing can be more weak than to imagine that the Judgments of People in Matters of Faith, must be formed according to the skill and excellency of their Teachers. For the hearers of Christ himself; *although he spake as never Man spake*, yet did very often mistake his meaning. And at one time so remarkably, that although he took care to rectify their misapprehension, yet it is John 6.66. said, *From that time many of his Disciples went back and walked no more with him.* So that the highest Infallibility in the Teachers, doth not prevent the Possibility, or the danger of mistaking in the Hearers. And whatsoever any vainly pretend, nothing can do it, but *Transfusing* the *Spirit* of *Infallibility* into all.

If we look over the *Apostolical Churches* while they were under the Care and Conduct of an *infallible Spirit*; yet this did not prevent their running into great Errours and Mistakes, as appears by the Account we have of them, given by that

that Spirit which cannot deceive in the Apoſtolical Writings.

In the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, even at that time, when *its Faith was ſpoken of throughout the World*, yet there were diſſenſions and differences there, and ſuch as were *contrary to the Doctrine* which was delivered. And St. *Paul* bids them *to mark ſuch which cauſed them*; he doth not ſay, it was impoſſible for them to introduce any thing *contrary to the Doctrine* which they had learned by *Tradition* from the Apoſtles; but he not only ſuppoſes it very poſſible, but he bids them have a particular Eye to them, leſt they ſhould be deceived by them. Rom. 1. 8. 16, 17.

The Church of *Corinth* was *planted by* Paul, *and watered by* Apollos; and there were Diſciples of *Cephas and of Chriſt himſelf*. And yet in the Midſt of ſo many infallible Teachers, they had like to have loſt all their Faith; as one of them tells them. *How ſay ſome among you there is no Reſurrection of the dead? And if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is alſo vain.* Could not they remember to day what was taught them yeſterday, and ſo what the Apoſtles at firſt preached to them? 1 Cor. 15. 12. 14.

The

The Churches of *Galatia* had such an opinion of St. *Paul*, upon his first preaching the Gospel among them, *that they received him as an Angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*; yet presently after he saith, *am I therefore become your Enemy because I tell you the Truth?* What! *Of an Angel of God*, or of one received *as Christ Jesus*, to *become their Enemy*, and that *upon* the most unjustifiable Account, *because he told them the Truth!* But, where Truth can make Enemies, Errours may easily gain Friends. And so we find it was in the Apostolical Churches, even under the Conduct and Teaching of the Apostles.

Gal. 4. 14. 16.

The *Colossians* were not yet so far gone; but they were in such danger, that the Apostle writes this Epistle with great Concernment for them. He tells them *v.* 1. *he had a* sharp *Conflict* in his own mind about them. *They had not yet seen his Face in the Flesh*, being converted by some sent by him, of whom *Epaphras* is most taken notice of; but he was present *with them in Spirit*, v. 5. *i. e.* He was deeply affected with their Condition; for he understood the Designs and Artifices of the Seducers among them. He knew what fair and plausible

Ch. 1. v. 7. 4. 12.

plauſible Pretences they had; *viz.* that they went about not to undermine Chriſtianity, but to advance it, by taking in ſome Jewiſh Cuſtoms, and ſome Gentile Obſervances, and Modes of Worſhip which might eaſily be accommodated to the Chriſtian Doctrine; and ſo a great deal of the Animoſities both of the Jews and Heathens would be removed; and Chriſtianity would thereby gain more Friends, and meet with fewer Enemies.

The Apoſtle finding how neceſſary it was at this time, if poſſible, to keep them *ſtedfaſt in the Faith*,

1. He aſſures them, that the Chriſtian Doctrine was of it ſelf ſo ſufficient for the good of Mankind, that it needed no Additions, either from the Law of *Moſes*, or the Philoſophy of the Gentiles, which might introduce ſeveral things, with a ſpecious Appearance of *Wiſdom*, *Humility* and *Mortification*; but they ought to be aſſured, that from Chriſt they had all that was neceſſary or uſefull for Salvation; *For in him are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge.* v. 3.

2. That this Doctrine was at firſt truly delivered to them, and they ought

to be ſtedfaſt in it; which is the deſign of the Text.

But they might object that *Epaphras* was no Apoſtle of Chriſt himſelf; and if he were, yet there were many Apoſtles, and the falſe Apoſtles pretended to be true ones; and although St. *Paul* interpoſed his Authority; yet he was but one, and the *Judaizers* would not yield to it, but were ready to ſuggeſt, that the other Apoſtles were more favourable to the Jewiſh Cuſtoms than he; and therefore it was neceſſary ſome more general and common Rule be found out, whereby to diſtinguiſh the Original and Genuine Doctrine of Chriſt from that of Pretenders and Seducers.

The clearing of this is in it ſelf a Matter of great Conſequence; and not only was to thoſe of that Age, but is ſo in every Age of the Chriſtian Church, where the ſame Queſtion may be put: What was the true Primitive Doctrine of Chriſt; and by what means may we come to it? which concerns us at this day as well as them.

And the Anſwer lay in two particulars, which I ſhall endeavour to clear.

1. That which the Apoſtles did in common deliver to the Churches planted

ted by them, was the Genuine Doctrine of Christ.

2. That which they have left in their Writings, after it came to be contested which was the true Doctrine of Christ.

3. That which the Apostles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them. For, we have all the reason in the World to believe, that the Apostles delivered one and the same Faith to all the Churches; having the same infallible Spirit to direct them. There was no need for them *to meet together before their dispersion, and to agree upon some common Article of Faith*, as *Rufinus* imagines, *lest they should differ from each other*; For how could they differ, who had the same *Spirit of Truth to lead them into all Truth*? And we find nothing like a Combination among the Apostles, as to Matters of Doctrine: And if there had been, it would have rendred the Faith they delivered more suspicious, in that they durst not trust particular Persons with delivery of it, without an antecedent Confederacy among themselves, which would have looked like a mistrust of that *Promise* of the *Spirits* being fulfilled, upon all of them. And we find, when the Gospels

Ruffin. in Symbol.

Joh. 16. 13.

were to be written, there was no ſuch meeting together, to ſettle the ſeveral Parts of it; and yet this was of as much conſequence to the Church of God; but St. *Matthew* writes his Goſpel in *Judæa*, at the time, ſaith *Irenæus*, *that* Peter *and* Paul *preached and founded a Church in* Rome, St. *Mark* either at *Rome* or in *Egypt*, *not till after their deceaſe*, ſaith the ſame very Ancient Father: St. *Luke* in *Greece*, after St. *Paul* planted Churches in *Rome*, and St. *John* in *Aſia*, after all the reſt. But there was the ſame Divine Spirit, which aſſiſted them all, and therefore there was ſuch a concurrence as ſhewed their veracity, but ſuch a variety as ſhewed there was no Combination.

Iren. l. 3. c. 1.

Euſeb. l. 5. c. 18.

But it is obſervable, that none of the Goſpels were written till the Doctrine of Chriſt had been preached by the Apoſtles in many Places, and many Churches were formed and eſtabliſhed by them. And there were two great Advantages thereby.

1. The Unity of the Faith delivered by the Apoſtles was the more ſeen; becauſe then without the help of a written Rule, they ſo unanimouſly agreed in the Doctrines they delivered. Not,

as

as though it were leſs poſſible to miſtake without it; but on the contrary, there being a much greater liableneſs to miſtake, ſo Univerſal a conſent, was the ſtronger Argument of a Divine Aſſiſtance. If there had been any difference in the Doctrines preached by the Apoſtles, there were ſo many Enemies both of Jews and Infidels, and falſe Apoſtles, who would preſently have reproached the Chriſtian Churches with it. But no diſagreement is ever ſo much as mention'd, as to what the Apoſtles themſelves taught; *They had one Body, one* Eph. 4. 4, 5, 6. *Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all.* Wherever the Apoſtles went, whether into *Scythia, Parthia, Meſopotamia,* or any Provinces of the *Roman* Empire, all who were converted by them were baptized into the ſame Faith, which St. *Jude calls* Jude v. 3. *the Faith once delivered to the Saints.* But *once delivered* though by many Perſons, and in very diſtant places; and ſo *once delivered,* as the ſame Faith once delivered is to continue to the World's end. For nothing can be made the Faith of Chriſt, which was not always ſo; for that were to lay a *new foundation,* and to make another Cove-

nant than what Christ hath sealed with his Blood. *But he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.* The Terms of Salvation can never be altered, unless there be a new Saviour, and new Apostles, and new Teachers. But if we go to Heaven by Christ, we must go that way that himself hath directed. For Men and Angels joining their Powers together cannot save one Soul; Christ alone *being the Way, the Truth and the Life; and none can come to the Father but by him.* This the Apostles very well knew, and were therefore carefull to deliver nothing to the Church but what they received from Christ, as St. *Paul* saith of himself, *For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you.* Not by way of Tradition from Men, but by immediate Divine Revelation; for as he saith, *he was not an Apostle of Men, or by Men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father*; and not long after he saith, *he neither received the Gospel of Man, neither was I taught it but by Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Heb. 13. 8.

John 14. 6.

1 Cor. 11.

Gal. 1. 1.

12.

There was none of all the first Preachers of the Gospel so liable to the Suspicion of setting up for himself, and varying from the rest as St. *Paul* was.

For

For he was none of the Original Number of Apoſtles, and he was a known Perſecutor of the Diſciples of Chriſt and ſudden Converts are always ſuſpected; and *Ananias* had a Viſion to ſatisfie him, and yet he could not tell what to think at firſt concerning him; and *the Diſciples* when they firſt heard him *were amazed*; after this, he took a courſe by himſelf, and did not go up to *Jeruſalem* to the College of *Apoſtles* there reſident, but went into *Arabia*; ſo that, if any one might be thought to ſet up another Doctrine, it was he; but he was ſo far from it, that he eſtabliſhed and confirmed the Truth of what they delivered, and was very ſucceſsfull in his Apoſtleſhip in all Places. And when there had been ſome Whiſpers concerning him, as though he proceeded not in the ſame way with the reſt, he went up to *Jeruſalem*, and there upon full examination, James *and* Cephas, *and* John, *who were the leading Apoſtles*, *gave him the Right-hand of Fellowſhip*; in token of their full conſent in the ſame Faith. Acts 9. 13. 21. Gal. 1. 17. 2. 9.

2. The truth of the Goſpel was the more plainly diſcovered.

All this while, the Apoſtles only preached and delivered their Doctrine to the ſeveral Churches by verbal Inſtructions; but after theſe had been received in the hearts of ſuch Multitudes, that there could be no ſuſpicion that a falſe Repreſentation of Chriſt's Doctrine or Actions could be received by thoſe Churches, then the wiſe Providence of God took care for Poſterity, and imploy'd ſeveral Perſons in diſtant Places and Times to write the Hiſtory of our Saviour. And there was this advantage to the Church that the Goſpels were written no ſooner. For all the Churches planted by the Apoſtles, were then made Judges whether the Goſpels written were agreeable to the Doctrine which the Apoſtles had taught; and if not, there would have been juſt reaſon to have queſtion'd either the Truth of what had been taught them, or what was delivered in the Goſpels.

But when they found the main to be fully conſonant to what they had been taught, the Teſtimony of every one of theſe Churches did ſhew the concurrence of all the Apoſtles, as to the Doctrine contained in the ſeveral Goſpels.

And

And that which adds to the ſtrength of this Proof is, that when the true Goſpels were written, there were ſeveral falſe and counterfeit Goſpels diſperſed abroad under the Names of the Apoſtles themſelves. As of St. *Peter*, St. *Thomas*, St. *Matthias*, and others; as *Euſebius* informs us; and as we have the genuine *Acts of the Apoſtles*, ſo there were the pretended *Acts of* Paul, *of* Andrew *and* John, and the other Apoſtles. How came theſe to be rejected, and the other to be carefully received? Here lies the true Advantage of *Original Tradition* before the *written Goſpels*, that by it the ſeveral Churches were enabled to paſs a true Judgment concerning them when they came to be diſperſed among them. For they could preſently tell, whether what they read were agreeable to what they had heard and received from the *Apoſtles*. As ſuppoſe the Goſpel of St. *Matthew* being publiſhed in *Judæa*, were carried into *Meſopotamia* or *Perſia*, where many Chriſtian Churches were very early planted; theſe being throughly inſtructed by the *Apoſtles* in all things relating to the Life, Death, Reſurrection and Doctrine of Chriſt, could preſently judge whether

Euſeb. Hiſt. l. 3. c. 25.

ther St. *Matthew's* Goſpel agreed with what they had heard or not, and the like holds as to all the Churches in the *Roman* Empire. So that the conſent of the Churches ſo ſoon, while the Memory of the Apoſtles Doctrine was ſo freſh in their minds, is in effect the conſent of *all the Apoſtles* who taught them.

And this is very different from the caſe of particular Perſons in ſome Churches, who might miſtake or forget what was taught; for this is a concurrent Teſtimony of all the Apoſtolical Churches, who could not agree to approve an Errour in the Goſpels contrary to the Faith delivered to them. And that while ſome of the Apoſtles were ſtill living. For the other Goſpels were received and approved, before St. *John* wrote his.

The caſe had been far otherwiſe, if no *Goſpels* had been written in that Age; for then it might have been ſuſpected, that either the Impreſſions of the firſt Teachers were worn out, or they had been by degrees alter'd from their firſt Apprehenſions by the cunning craftineſs of thoſe who lay in wait to deceive them.

After

After the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, the common Tradition of the *Apoſtolical Churches* was uſefull in theſe caſes;

1. To convey down the Authentick Writings of the Apoſtles or Evangeliſts, which were delivered to any of them.

2. To bear Teſtimony againſt any pretended Writings, which were not firſt received by the *Apoſtolical Churches* to which they were ſaid to be written. For there can be no Negative Teſtimony of more force than that; it being improbable to the utmoſt degree that ſuch a Church ſhould not know, or not make known any true *Apoſtolical Writings.*

3. To overthrow any pretence to a ſecret Tradition from the *Apoſtles* different from what was ſeen in the *Apoſtolical Writings.* And to this purpoſe *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* make very good uſe of the *Tradition* of the *Apoſtolical Churches* againſt the pretenders to ſuch a *Tradition,* which thoſe Churches were not acquainted with. *Iren. l. 3. c. 3, 4. Tertul. de Præſcript. Hær.*

But they agree that the Apoſtles committed *the ſame Doctrine to writing which they preached, and that it might be a Foundation and Pillar of Faith*; that this Doctrine was contained in the *four Goſpels*;

ſpels; and that the Apoſtolical Churches did receive them from thoſe who firſt wrote them, and that within the compaſs of the Apoſtolical Age.

It was therefore moſt agreeable to the infinite Wiſdom of God in providing for a conſtant Eſtabliſhment of the Faith of his Church in all Ages, neither to permit the Goſpels to be written till the Churches were planted, nor to be put off to another Generation. For, then it would have been plauſibly objected; "if theſe things are true, why "were they not recorded, when there "were Perſons living who were beſt a-"ble to have either proved, or confu-"ted them? Then we might have been "ſatisfied one way or other; but now "the Jews are dead, and the Apoſtles "are dead; and although there are ma-"ny left who believe their Doctrine, "yet this can never reach to the Te-"ſtimony of thoſe who ſaw and heard "the things themſelves, or whoſe Do-"ctrine was atteſted by thoſe who did "ſo. And this is now the mighty Advantage of the Church ever ſince that the things concerning Chriſt were written by ſuch Perſons. With what another kind of Authority do thoſe words com-

command our Aſſent, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; For the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that Eternal Life; which was with the Father, and was manifeſt unto us, that which we have ſeen and heard declare we unto you;* then if all the Teſtimony concerning Chriſt were to be reſolved into thoſe who heard ſome ſay, that others told them, they had it from ſuch, who ſaw thoſe who converſed with them who ſaw Chriſt in the Fleſh? At ſuch a diſtance the Authority of a Teſtimony is extremely leſſen'd; which is not like a River which grows greater by running; but like a mineral Water which loſes its ſtrength by being carried too far. We find in the time of *Papias* who lived but in the ſecond Century, the Authority of bare Tradition was mightily ſunk; For, *Euſebius* ſaith. *he converſed with the Diſciples of our Lord and his Apoſtles*, he ſaith of himſelf, *that he went up and down to them to get what he could from them, having a greater eſteem of what he could learn from them than*

1 John 1. 1, 2, 3.

Euſeb. Hiſt. l. 3. c. 39.

than of what was written. And what Advantage did this bring to the Church? *It brought ſome idle opinions into reputation,* ſaith *Euſebius*; for afterwards they thought it enough to fix them upon *Papias.* But how was it poſſible for him to miſtake? *Euſebius* ſaith, *that being a Man of mean capacity, he might eaſily miſunderſtand the meaning of what was ſpoken.* But if Tradition might fail after ſuch a manner ſo near the Apoſtle's times; then we muſt be aſſured of the *Capacity* as well as *Integrity* of thoſe of every Age through whom a Tradition paſſed, or elſe they might deceive, or be deceived about it.

But God was pleaſed to provide better for the ſecurity of our Faith, by cauſing the Goſpels to be written either by the Apoſtles themſelves, as St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, or by the Diſciples of the chief Apoſtles, while the others were ſurviving, as St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*; and the latter gives this account of his undertaking to write it, viz. *That thou mighteſt know the the certainty of thoſe things wherein thou haſt been inſtructed.* His inſtruction was by an Oral Tradition; but that it ſeems wanted ſomething to ſtrengthen and confirm it; and

Luke 1. 4.

that

that was by St. *Luke's* writing his Gospel. How could they add any assurance to him, if all the ground of his certainty were to be taken from Tradition? St. *Luke* thought it necessary then, that those things which concerned the Life and Doctrine of Christ should be put into Writing, that they might be more certainly convey'd; and that while they had the Testimony of those, *who were Eye-witnesses and Ministers of the Word.*

2. And so I come to the second Rule of discerning the Primitive Doctrine of Christ; *viz.* The Writings of the Apostles, when Matters of Doctrine came to be contested, were the infallible Rule, whereby they were to judge, which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Christ.

There are some who pretend, that the Apostle's Writings were meerly *Accidental and Occasional* things, but that the main Design was to lodge the great Assurance of the Doctrine of Christ in *Tradition* from one to another; and what they wrote was not to make any *Rule of Faith*, but only to give some good Advice to those Churches they wrote to.

But

But I ſhall now prove that the Writings of the *Apoſtles* were intended by the Holy Ghoſt to be a *ſtanding Rule*, whereby the Church was to judge which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Chriſt.

1. From the Reaſons and Occaſions of writing the *Books* of the *New Teſtament*.

1. As to the *Goſpels*, we muſt diſtinguiſh the *General Reaſon* of writing them, from the *particular Occaſions* as to the ſeveral Goſpels. The *general Reaſon* is to be drawn from the Divine Wiſdom which inſpired and guided them; the particular *Occaſions* relate to the circumſtances of writing them.

The *General Reaſon* is that which *Ireneus* gives, *viz. That the Goſpel which they had firſt preached, was by the Will of God put into Writing, that it might be a Foundation and Pillar of our Faith.* Not meerly *to keep up the Remembrance of it*, which *Feuardentius* yields, and thereby overthrows the Infallibility of *Oral Tradition*; but that ſo it may be a certain Rule of Faith to all Ages. The *Evangeliſts* ſaith St. *Auguſtin, were but Chriſt's Hands, which himſelf as the Head, directed in writing the Goſpels, and therefore*

Iren. l. 3 c. 1.

Aug. de Conſenſ. Evang. l. 1. c. 54.

fore we are to look on the Goſpels as his own Hand-writing. The Holy Ghoſt, ſaith he, *directed the Minds of the Evangeliſts, as to the order and manner of their Writing.* Which varied according to the particular Occaſions, but yet were all ſubſervient to the General Reaſon. *l.* 2. *c.* 53.

St. *Matthew wrote the firſt Goſpel,* ſaith *Euſebius, to the* Jews *to whom he had preached, becauſe going into other parts he would ſupply the want of his Preſence among them by his Writing.* What need this, if Tradition were a certain and infallible way of conveying the Doctrine of Chriſt? St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith, *the* Jewiſh *Chriſtians deſired him to put into Writing what they had heard him preach.* Did not they underſtand the force of Tradition better? Or why ſhould St. *Matthew* put them out of an infallible way? The Author of the imperfect Work on St. *Matthew* ſaith, *they deſired him to write his Goſpel, that where-ever they went they might carry an Account of their Faith with them. Clemens Alexandrinus* ſaith, *the occaſion of writing St.* Mark's *Goſpel was, that the people were not ſatisfied with an unwritten delivery of the Holy Doctrine, and therefore importuned* *Euſeb. Hiſt. l.* 3. *c.* 24. *Chryſ. Hom.* 1 *in Matth.* *Opus Imperfect. in Mat. in Prolog.* *Euſeb. l.* 2. *c.* 15.

Mark, *who was the Diſciple of St.* Peter, *that he would leave a Monument of his Doctrine in Writing; which St.* Peter *underſtanding by Revelation, approved and confirmed his Goſpel for the uſe of the Churches. Origen* ſaith, *he wrote it according to St.* Peter's *directions. Epiphanius* ſaith, *by his Authority. Athanaſius* ſaith, *it was dictated by him at* Rome.

Euſeb l. 6. c. 25. Epiphan. Har. 51. Athanaſ. in Synopſ. p. 155.

It ſeems that *Peter* himſelf did not think fit to leave the Doctrine of Chriſt to an *Oral Tradition*, even at *Rome*, but *Irenæus* thinks it was written after St. *Peter*'s deceaſe, who therein differs from the reſt, and ſhews how uncertain meer Tradition is. *Tertullian* ſaith, *St.* Mark's *Goſpel was attributed to St.* Peter, *and St.* Luke's *to St.* Paul. St. *Jerom* mentions the Opinion of ſome, that when St. *Paul* ſaith *according to my Goſpel*, he means that of St. *Luke*.

Tertul. c. Marc. l. 4. c. 5. Hieron. de Script. Eccleſ.

But St. *Luke* himſelf plainly gives an Account of the occaſion of his writing. St. *Ambroſe* thinks by thoſe *who had taken in hand to write of thoſe things which were firmly believed among us*, he means the *Authors of the counterfeit Goſpels, as that of the Twelve Apoſtles and* St. *Matthias*. But we have no evidence that theſe were older than St. *Luke*; his mea-

Ambroſ. in Luc. 1. 1.

ning

ning is, that in those parts where he was, there were some who did undertake to give an Account of the Life and Actions of Christ, who wanted the Advantages which he had; having had great opportunities of knowing circumstances from *the Eye-witnesses*; and therefore he set himself to give an exact Relation of them, that not only *Theophilus*, but every one that answers his name *might know the certainty of those things wherein they had been instructed.* But, did not they know the certainty of these things by the Apostle's Preaching? Yes, but the things they heard might slip out of their Memories; and to prevent this, saith *Theophylact*, *St.* Luke *wrote his Gospel, that they might retain these things with greater certainty.* And words that are only spoken are more easily misunderstood; which *Maldonat* assigns, as one great Reason of the Evangelists writing their several Gospels.

Epiph. Har. 51.

Theophyl. in Luc.

Maldonat. Com. in Evang. prol.

St. *John* likewise gives an account himself of the Reason of his writing; and that the greatest imaginable. *But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name.* Joh. 20 31

Why *written that ye might believe?* Did the Apoſtle in his old Age miſtruſt the Underſtandings or the Memories of Chriſtians? Was not the Apoſtle's Teaching ſufficient to keep up the Principles of the Chriſtian Faith in the hearts of the People; no, not while St. *John* himſelf was yet living? He had certainly a very mean Opinion of Tradition, that thought it neceſſary for him to write that they might believe that *Jeſus is the Son of God.* For there was no point of Faith more neceſſary than this, which was required of all Perſons to be owned before Baptiſm.

Yet for all this, and whatever elſe can be ſaid, St. *John* thought it neceſſary *that theſe things be written that they might believe.*

He lived the longeſt of any of the Apoſtles, and therefore ſaw how little Tradition was to be truſted; for it was already corrupted in ſo weighty a point as the Divinity of Chriſt.

Cerinthus and his Followers allow'd the general Tradition of the Church, that *Jeſus was the Son of God*; but then they gave their own ſenſe of it, by extraordinary Favour and Adoption. And from hence the Fathers agree that

St.

St. *John* took occaſion to write his Divine Goſpel, to clear this Fundamental point of the Chriſtian Faith. *Hieron. Proem. in Matth. De Script. Eccleſ.*

And withall obſerving that the other Evangeliſts inſiſted chiefly on the Actions of Chriſt for one year, *viz. after John's Impriſonment*, he reſumes the whole Matter, and adds thoſe things which were omitted by the reſt; that ſo the Church might be furniſhed with a full Relation of all that was neceſſary to compleat and eſtabliſh the Faith of Chriſtians. *Epiph. Hær. 51. Chryſoſt. Hom. 1. in Matth. Euſeb. l. 3. c. 24.*

2. As to the *Epiſtles*.

The firſt *Epiſtle* we read of in the Chriſtian Church, (and in probability the firſt writing in the New Teſtament) was the *Decretal Epiſtle* of the *Council* of *Jeruſalem*. Act. 15. 23.

What ſhould make the Apoſtles put theſe Decrees into Writing? They were very ſhort, and concerned the Practices of Men, and withall were ſent by *Barnabas* and *Paul*, and *Judas*, and *Silas*. Were not theſe ſufficient to deliver the Apoſtle's Senſe to the Churches, without Letters from them? What a pitifull thing did they take Oral Tradition to be, if they thought ſuch Men could not by it give full ſatisfaction to the Churches

of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, unleſs they ſent it under their hands?

The *Epiſtle* to the *Romans* was written by St. *Paul* on purpoſe to clear ſome main Points of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which were then warmly diſputed between the Jews and the Chriſtians, and between the Judaizing Chriſtians and others, as about *Juſtification*, *Rejection of the Jews*, the *difference* of *Meats*, &c. And St. *Paul* took very needleſs pains in writing that excellent Epiſtle, if he knew of Chriſt's appointing a *Judge of Controverſies* there; or if he thought Writing were not a certain way to make a Rule of Faith, whereby they were to judge in thoſe Matters.

The firſt *Epiſtle* to the *Corinthians* was written not meerly to reprove their Factions and Diſorders; but to direct them, and to eſtabliſh and prove the
1 Cor. 15. 12. Faith of the *Reſurrection*, which was then conteſted among them. The *Epiſtle* was ſent by *Stephanus* and *Fortunatus*, who could have carried the Apoſtle's Senſe without his Writing; but there are many weighty things, beſides the particular occaſions which are of laſting concernment to the Church in all Ages; as there are likewiſe in his ſecond Epiſtle to them.

The

The *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians* was written on occaſion of one of the greateſt Points of controverſie at that time, *viz.* the Uſe and Obligation of the Law of *Moſes*. And St. *Paul* found by ſad experience among them, that it was very poſſible for thoſe who had the beſt Inſtructions, either to forget them, or to grow out of love with them, and to be fond of a change: elſe he would never have ſaid, *O fooliſh* Galatians, *who hath bewitched you that you ſhould not obey the Truth?* And *I marvel that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Chriſt into another Goſpel.* How! was it indeed poſſible for them to be *removed*, and to be ſo ſoon *removed*, who had received the Faith by the Delivery of St. *Paul* himſelf? Then, for all that I can ſee, humane Nature taken with all its Advantages and Motives, and Evidences, is a very fallible thing; and if then it might be deceived, and that ſo eaſily and groſly; then much more in any following Age of the Church; unleſs humane Nature be mightily changed for the better, ſince the Apoſtle's times; or any Teachers ſince be more effectual, than the Apoſtles, and eſpecially than *St.* Paul, *who laboured more abundantly than they all.* The

Gal. 3. 1.

1. 6.

1 Cor. 15. 10.

The *Epiſtle* to the *Epheſians*, though written upon a general Argument, yet doth ſuppoſe that they were in continual danger of being deceived; *and toſſed up and down, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the ſlight of Men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

Eph. 4. 14.

And therefore he adviſes them to be upon their guard, and to have their Armour about them, and one choice part of it, *is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*

6. 17.

The *Philippians* were aſſaulted by a rude, violent, head-ſtrong Faction of Judaizers; which the Apoſtle bids them to beware of; and writes his Epiſtle to them for that purpoſe, and he exhorts them *to ſtand faſt in one Spirit, with one mind ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel.*

Phil. 3. 2.

1. 27.

In the ſecond Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, and in both Epiſtles to *Timothy*, he gives notice of a great Deſection from the Chriſtian Faith; he deſcribes the manner of it, *that it ſhall be with ſigns and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the truth; that they ſhall ſpeak lies in hypo-*

2 Theſſ. 2. 3.

10.

1 Tim. 4. 2, 3.

hypocriſie, and forbid to marry, and command to abſtain from meats, being evil Men, having a form of godlineſs, and denying the power of it. I meddle not now with the time when this Apoſtacy began; but from hence, it is evident that St. *Paul* ſuppoſed, that thoſe who at firſt received the Chriſtian Faith by Tradition from the Apoſtles themſelves, might notwithſtanding through their own Weakneſs and Folly, and the Artifices of Deceivers be drawn from it; and that to prevent ſuch miſchievous conſequences, he knew no better means than a written Rule, which he tells *Timothy was able to make him wiſe to Salvation; and to make the Man of God perfect, throughly furniſhed to every good Work.* 2 Tim. 3. 1. 5. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

And to name no more, the *Coloſſians* were ſet upon by ſome who thought to refine Chriſtianity; or at leaſt to make it more paſſable in the World, and therefore would have introduced into it ſome Rites of the Jews, ſome Auſterities of the Gentiles, ſome ways of Worſhip which would recommend them to their Adverſaries; and upon this occaſion he writes this Epiſtle to them to convince them that Chriſtianity

nity alone was far beyond any Mixtures of the Fancies or Traditions of Men, and therefore he could give them no better Advice, than as they had first received the Doctrine of Christ to continue in it, or in the words of the Text, *As they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him.*

The design of what I have said is, that although the *Gospels* and *Epistles* were written upon particular *occasions*; yet those *occasions* were so great and considerable; and the Assistance of the Holy Ghost did so direct the Hands and Pens of the Evangelists and Apostles in writing them, that what they have therein delivered contains a compleat Rule of the true and genuine Faith, as it was at first delivered to the Church.

But against this, it is objected, *that* a Thess. 2. 15. *St.* Paul *himself charged the* Thessalonians *to stand fast and hold the Traditions which they have been taught either by Word or by his Epistles. From whence it appears, that there were other Traditions to be held, that were not written.*

The force of all this will be taken away, if we consider when that Epistle was written; *viz.* one of the first which St. *Paul* wrote, and soon after the former

mer Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*; which was ſome time before St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, which was firſt received in the Churches of *Greece* planted by St. *Paul*. Therefore all the proper Doctrine of Chriſt himſelf, and all that relates to his Life and Actions were then but Traditions among them; and therefore St. *Paul* had great Reaſon then to require them *to ſtand faſt to the Traditions they had been taught*; i. e. to the Doctrine of Chriſt they had received in that manner.

But it is urged, *that he mentions before, ſomething he had ſaid about Antichriſt's coming when he was with them*, v. 5. *Bell. de verbo. l. 4. c. 5.*

If this be allow'd, it will be more againſt than for *Tradition*. For, what is become of that *Tradition*? If it be loſt, then it follows that *Tradition* is no *infallible Way* of conveyance; and therefore we have more Reaſon to adhere to a written Word.

2. Which leads us to the ſecond Reaſon from which I deſigned to prove, that there ought to be a written Rule for diſcerning true primitive Chriſtianity; and that is from *the notorious uncertainty of meer Tradition*. I ſay, *notorious*,

rious, becauſe there never was any Trial made of it, but it failed, even when it had the greateſt Advantages.

I might inſiſt upon the *Tradition* of the firſt Ages of the World; when Men's lives were ſo long, and the Principles of the Natural Religion ſo few; and yet both before and after the Flood, Mankind was ſtrangely degenerated from them.

I might inſiſt on many Inſtances in the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church; ſo many, that ſcarce one can be produced wherein they pleaded meer Tradition, but they were miſtaken in it; As about the *Millennium*, the *Age of Chriſt*, the *time of* Eaſter (on one ſide or other) the *communicating Infants*. For St. *Auguſtin* quotes *Apoſtolical Tradition* for it.

Aug. de Peccat. Meritis. l. 1. c. 4.

But I ſhall wave all theſe, and only mention a very neceſſary and important thing, which was a long time truſted to *Tradition*, and yet they differ'd ſo much about it, as evidently proved, that meer Tradition was no infallible Means of conveyance. And that is about the *Apoſtle's Creed* which was to be repeated by all that were to be baptized.

We

We have many plain Teſtimonies to prove, that this was not to be written; but to be conveyed from one to another, by an *Oral Tradition*; (*a*) St. *Hierom*, (*b*) St. *Auguſtin*, (*c*) *Ruffinus* all affirm it.

(a) *In Symbolo Fidei & Spei noſtræ, quod ab Apoſtolis traditum, non ſcribitur in Charta & Atramento, ſed in tabulis cordis carnalibus.* Hieron. ad Pammachium adverſ. Errores Joh. Hieroſol.

(b) *Nec ut eadem verba Symboli teneatis, ullo modo debetis ſcribere, ſed audiendo perdiſcere; nec cum didiceritis ſcribere, ſed memoriâ ſemper tenere & recolere.* Auguſt. de Diverſis Serm. 75.

(c) *Idcirco denique hæc non ſcribi chartulis & membranis, ſed requiri credentium cordibus tradiderunt, ut certum eſſet hæc neminem ex lectione, quæ interdum pervenire etiam ad infideles ſolet, ſed ex Apoſtolorum traditione didiciſſe.* Ruffinus in Symbol.

And the *Creed* was commonly then called (*d*) *the Rule of Faith*; which ſhewed that they looked on all the Articles therein contained, as the Standard of neceſſary Points.

(d) *Tertul. de Præſcrip. c.* 12, 13, 14, 21. *De Virgin. Vel. c.* 1. *Adverſ. Praxeam c.* 2. *Auguſt. Serm.* 59. 186. 213. 215. *Retract. l.* 2. *c.* 3. *Enchirid. de Fide, n.* 15. *De Symbol. ad Catech. Ruffin. in Præam.*

And yet there is a plain and conſiderable difference in the Ancient Creeds; ſome Articles being in ſome which were not in others; Although we have Reaſon to believe the neceſſary Points were at firſt the ſame in all. Or elſe the ſeveral

veral Churches must have different Rules of Faith.

The Church of *Jerusalem* was called (c) *the Mother of all Churches* by the General Council of *Constantinople*; and in the Creed there delivered to the *Catechumens*. (d) St. *Cyril* mentions the *Eternal Generation of the Son before all Worlds*; and so doth (e) *Eusebius* at *Cæsarea* in the Creed, which he saith, *he learnt at his Baptism*, which was long before *the Nicene Creed*. (f) *Cassian* makes it a part of that Creed which the Apostles delivered to the Church, and was particularly received in the Church of *Antioch*.

(c) *Theod. l. 5. c. 9.*

(d) *Cyril. Catech. 11.*

(e) *Theodo. l. 1. c. 12.*

(f) *Cassian de incarn. l. 6. c. 3, 4.*

But no such thing was delivered in the *Western Creeds* as far as now appears, by what St. *Augustin*, *Ruffinus*, and others say in their Expositions of it.

St. *Jerom* writing against the Bishop of *Jerusalem*, urges him with the *Creed*, (g) (no doubt that which was received in his own Church) and he saith, *it consisteth of three main Points, the Confession of the Trinity, the Unity of the Church, and the Resurrection of the Flesh.*

(g) *Hieron. ad Pammach.*

And

And the Creed of the Church of *Aquileia* went no farther, saith (*b*) *Ruffinus*; nor some old Copies of the *Roman Creed.*

(b) *Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 191. V. Usser. de Sym. p. 849.*

But *Marcellus* of *Ancyra* had *Eternal Life* in his (*i*) Creed, and so had (*k*) *Cyril* of *Jerusalem*; so had the *African* Church in St. (*l*) *Augustin*'s time; so had the Church of *Ravenna*; but not the Church of *Turin*; nor the *Gallican* Churches; if *Maximus Taurinensis*, and *Venantius Fortunatus* explained all the Articles of their Creeds.

(i) *Epiph. Hæres.* 72. (k) *Cyrill. Catech.* 18. (l) *Aug. de Symb. l.* 1. *Petr. Chryso. Sol. Serm.* 57, *&c.*

Ruffinus confesses the Article of *Descent into Hell*, was not in the *Roman*, nor in any of the *Eastern Creeds.*

The Creeds of *Jerusalem* and *Aquileia* had not *the Communion of Saints*; nor those of *Marcellus* and (*m*) *Epiphanius.*

(m) *Epiph. Ancorat.*

The Title of *Catholick* was not added to the *Church* in the Creed in St. (*n*) *Augustin*'s time; for he makes it a *Periphrasis, utique Catholicam*, from whence probably it came to be added afterwards.

(n) *August. de Fide & Symbolo. Et de Symbolo Serm.* 243.

Ruffinus takes no notice of it, and it was not extant in the old Copies of the *Roman* Creed; nor in that of *Marcellus Ancyranus.*

These

These things I mention, not in the least to shake the Faith of the Articles of the *Apostle's Creed*; which (o) St. *Augustin* saith *was gathered out of Scriptures*, and is agreeable to them; but to shew what an uncertain way of conveyance meer Oral Tradition is, when a thing so easily remembred, so constantly used, of so much weight and consequence, fell into such varieties in the greatest Churches, while they were so scrupulous about the writing of it.

(o) De Symbolo ad Catech. c. 1.

What cause have we then to be thankfull to God, that hath taken so much care of his Church, as to provide us an infallible written Rule in the Holy Scriptures, whereby we certainly know, what the true Primitive Christianity was, which was delivered by Christ and his Apostles?

But here is a great difficulty to be removed, as to the written Word.

How can we be certain, we have it, if not by Tradition? and if Tradition be so uncertain, how can we be made certain by it, that we have that written Word which the Apostles delivered? For might not that fail in this, as well as the Creed? And then what security can we have for our Faith?

In

In Answer to this, I shall shew,

1. What Advantage things that are written have, as to the certainty of conveyance above things meerly committed to Memory and Tradition.

2. What Advantage the Scriptures have, above any other things committed to Writing as to the certainty of their conveyance.

1. As to the Advantage things written have above those committed to Memory and Tradition only. Which will appear by these things,

1. It was the way God himself made choice of, where the Reason for Tradition was stronger; I mean as to the Ten Commandments, which were short and plain, and easie to be remembred, and very agreeable to the Sense and General Interest of Mankind; yet the Wise God who perfectly understood the Nature of Man, would not leave the Ten Commandments to an Oral Tradition, but God delivered to *Moses* Two Tables of Stone written with the Finger of God; and on them he wrote the Ten Commandments. What a vain and superfluous thing were this, if Oral and Practical Tradition were infallible? But God's own pitching upon this way, after Deut. 9. 10. 10. 4.

ter so long a Trial of Mankind in the other; is a Demonstration of the greater certainty of it, if we suppose that God aimed at the benefit of Mankind by it.

2. When Religion was corrupted among the Jews, the only way of restoring it was by a written Book of the Law.

As we find in the case of *Josiah*'s Reformation, which was made by the Book of the Law, which was found in the House of the Lord.

2 King. 22. 8. 23. 2, 3.

This was the Rule by which *Hilkiah* the High-Priest, thought it necessary for *Josiah* to go by; and not by any Tradition left among them concerning the Law which God had given by *Moses*.

3. This was that which our Saviour appealed to in all his Disputes; *search the Scriptures*, saith he to the *Jews*; not run to your Traditions, for those were then very corrupt, especially about the Messias, as that he was to be a Temporal Prince, &c. which was then a dangerous and fundamental Mistake; and therefore Christ appeals from them to the Scriptures; *And they are they which testifie of me. Had ye believed* Moses,

Joh. 5. 39. 46. 47.

ye

ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my Words? And our Saviour severely checks the *Pharisees* for regarding their own Traditions more than the written Law. And yet they pretended to an Oral Tradition down from *Moses*; as the Jews do to this day; and none are more grosly deceived than they. Matth. 15. 3. 9.

4. The general Sense and Experience of Mankind agrees herein, that all matters of consequence are more certainly preserved by Writings than by meer Words. There is no Invention hath been more valued by the wiser Part of Mankind than that of *Letters*; because it is of such excellent use for conveying the sense of our Minds at a distance to others. All men have so great a Mistrust, either of the capacity or memory, or fidelity of others: that what they would have done with security they commit to Writing. And whatever we truly understand of the Ages before us, we are beholden to Writing for it; all those memorable Actions, and Institutions, either of *Philosophy* or *Religion* which were not written, are long since buried in Oblivion, without possibility of a Resurrection.

But where they have been committed to Writing they are preſerved after ſo many Ages; and by it we certainly know the Hiſtory of the *Patriarchs*, and the ſtrange Revolutions that happened from the beginning of the World. By it, we converſe with the wiſeſt Perſons of former times; and are able to juſtifie the Scriptures by the concurrent Teſtimonies of other Writers. By it, we are enabled to interpret Prophecies, and to make plain their Accompliſhments, which without it, we could never make out. Yea by it, the Wiſdom of thoſe is preſerved for the benefit of Mankind, who thought fit to write nothing themſelves, as *Socrates* and *Pythagoras*, but their Diſciples took care in time to write their Doctrines. So that we have the general Conſent of the wiſeſt Part of Mankind, that Writing is a far more certain way of conveyance than meer Tradition.

2. And eſpecially in our caſe where there are ſo many particular Advantages, as to the *Holy Scriptures*, above any other Writings.

1. From the ſpecial Providence of God, with reſpect to them; for ſince it is agreed by all Chriſtians, that theſe were

were written by Divine Inſpiration, it is moſt reaſonable to believe, that a more than ordinary care would be taken to preſerve them.

And therefore to ſuppoſe any Books of Scripture to be loſt, which contained any neceſſary Points of Faith is a great Reflexion on Divine Providence: For, if God watches over his Church, he cannot be ſuppoſed to let ſuch Books be loſt which were deſigned for the univerſal and laſting Benefit of his Church.

2. From the mighty Eſteem which the Church of God had always for them; for, they built their Hopes of Heaven upon the Promiſes contained in them. The Book of Scripture was their Evidence for their future Inheritance; the Foundation of their Hope, and Rule of their Faith; their Defence againſt Aſſaults and Temptations; their Counſeller in caſes of Difficulty; their Support, under Troubles; and their ſureſt Guide to a happy Eternity; and therefore the Primitive Chriſtians choſe rather to endure any Torments than baſely to betray it, and give it up to their Enemies.

3. From the early disputes that were about them. Which shews that they were no Invention of After-times; nor were brought into the World by Stealth and Art; for, they endured the greatest shock of opposition at first, while the Matters of Fact concerning them were the most easily proved. And having passed the severe Scrutiny of the first Ages, when so many counterfeit Writings were sent abroad, the following Ages could have no Reason to call their Authority in question.

4. From the general Consent of divided Churches about them. It might have pleased God to have kept his Church from those unhappy Breaches which have been in all Parts of the Christian World; but the East, and the West, the North and the South can all bear Testimony to the sad Divisions of Christendom; and those of many Ages standing. But yet, we have this considerable Advantage by them; that we can have no Reason to mistrust a conspiracy where the several Bodies are so much divided.

5. From the great internal Satisfaction which the Minds of good Men have concerning them; and which no other Wri-

Writing can pretend to give. For here we read of the Promiſe of Divine Aſſiſtance to ſincere and humble Minds. And that Aſſiſtance carries a *Lumen Fidei* into the Mind; as *Aquinas* calls it 2. 2. *a* 3 *ad* 2. *and by that*, he ſaith, *the Mind is united to Truth, that its Aſſent is only fixed upon it; and therefore there is no danger of Damnation to thoſe who are in Chriſt Jeſus, and are thus illuminated by Faith in him.* Not that this is an Argument to convince others, who have not that inward Senſe which they have; but the ſame Holy Spirit which did at firſt indite them, may give ſuch an inward and effectual Teſtimony as to the Truth of the Matter contained in them; that from thence they may firmly conclude theſe Books to contain the Word of God. And that Aſſurance which the Minds of good Men have from the Influence of Divine Grace, may be more effectual and powerfull in them, than all the pretended Infallibility or Demonſtration in the World. It is certain thoſe cannot be deceived whom the Holy Spirit teacheth; and the beſt and wiſeſt of the Antient Schoolmen did make the great firmneſs and certainty of Faith not to depend on out-

ward Motives, but on inward Grace; which so inlightned the Mind, and fixed the Inclinations of the Soul, that nothing is able to remove it. This sort of Faith is no blind Assent; but after all the Evidence which it hath to make its Assent reasonable; it takes so fast a hold of Divine Truths by discerning the excellency and value of them, that he that hath it is willing to let go any thing rather than that; and although the Apprehension of Faith be not so clear as
Heb. 11.1. that of Science; yet the *Hypostasis*, as the Apostle calls it, may be so firm, that no Temptations may be able to shake it. And he that can die for his Religion hath a stronger and better Faith, than he that thinks himself never so infallible in the Grounds of it. That is
Acts 15.9. a true Divine Faith which *purifies the Heart*, and thereby enlightens the
Gal. 5. 6. Mind; which *works by Love*, and not by cavilling and wrangling about the
1 Joh. 5.4. Grounds of it; *which overcomes the World*, and not that which is overcome by the Temptations of it. And such a Faith, and only such a one will carry us to Heaven; when, if it were possible for us to have the utmost Infallibility in the Act of believing; yet if it did not work effectu-

effectually on our Hearts and Lives, we might go infallibly to Hell.

And so I shall conclude this Discourse with the second Sense of the Obligation which lies on those *who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him: i.e.* to improve their sound Faith into the Practice of a good Life.

For alas! What advantage will it be to us, to have the most Primitive and Apostolical *Faith*, if our *Works* be not answerable to it? *Why call ye me Lord, Lord*, saith Christ, *and do not the things which I say?* Why do we pretend *to receive Christ Jesus the Lord*, if we do not observe his Commands? *It is good*, saith St. *Paul, to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* And no doubt our *Faith* is such; but then let us be *zealous of good Works too*, that we may shew our selves to be *that peculiar People who are redeemed by Jesus Christ.* So that our Obligation arises every way from *Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him*; if we consider him as *our Lord*, so we are to obey him; if as *Christ Jesus*, so he died for us *to redeem us from all iniquity.* We can have no pretence to live in our sins, if we have received him who commands us to forsake them; for then we receive

Luk. 6. 46.

Gal. 4. 18.

Tit. 2. 14.

and

and reject him at the same time. *Let*
2 Tim. 2. 19. *every one that names the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity*, saith St. *Paul*, what should those then do that profess *to receive him as their Lord*, who are thereby bound to yield obedience to his Laws? one of the great causes of the Degeneracy of the Heathen World was the separating *Religion* and *Morality*; when this was left to the Schools of Philosophers to instruct men in, whereas their Religion consisted only of some Solemn Rites and Sacrifices. Let us have a care of as dangerous a Separation between *Faith* and *Works*, or which is all one, between *receiving Christ, and doing his Will*. For those are the proper *Works* of the Gospel, wherein we own *Christ* as *our Lord*, and do them because he commands us. And the Apostle hath summ'd up the *whole Duty* of *Christians* in those comprehensive
Tit. 2. 12. words, *Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this pre-*
13. *sent World; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. To whom, &c.

SER-

SERMON III.

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

February *the* 22^d, 168⅞.

1 Pet. IV. 18.

And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear.

THis Epiſtle was written by S. *Peter* for the Incouragement of Chriſtians under all their Sufferings; but theſe Words ſeem to carry ſo much Terrour and

and Severity in them, as though none but Martyrs and Confessors could have any Reason to hope for Salvation, and all others were to be left in Despair. Although Mankind be not easily satisfied concerning the Punishment denounced against *the Ungodly and Sinner*, yet the Justice of God, the Equity of his Commands, the Freedom of their Choice, the Contempt of Grace, and their willfull and obstinate Impenitency take away all just Cause of Complaint: But, that *the Righteous should scarcely be saved*, seems hardly reconcilable with the Grace, and Design, and Promises, of the Gospel. For the *Righteous* here are not vain, proud, self-conceited Hypocrites, such who *think they need no Repentance*, but such who by the Grace of God were brought off from their former Sins, and were *redeemed from their vain Conversation with the precious Blood of Christ, who had purified their Souls in obeying the Truth through the Spirit*; Who were *a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People*; yet of such as these it is said, *if the Righteous scarcely be saved.* But how can this agree with the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God declared in the Gospel, whereby

1 Pet. 1. 18, 19, 20.

c. 2. v. 9.

whereby Sinners are courted and encouraged to repent with the Hopes and Promiſe of Salvation? Did not *Chriſt come to ſave Sinners*, and St. *Paul* call this *a faithfull ſaying and worthy of all acceptation*; and yet after all, *ſhall the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved?* What *Joy in Heaven can there be over one Sinner that repents*, if after his Repentance it be ſo hard to come to Heaven? Doth not Chriſt himſelf invite thoſe who are *weary, and heavy laden, to come to him*, with a Promiſe that *he will give reſt to their Souls?* But what Reſt can they have, who, notwithſtanding their coming to him, do with ſo much difficulty attain to Eternal Reſt? How can that be ſaid to be *an eaſie yoke, and a light burthen*, which is of it ſelf ſo hard to be born, and the Reward which is to make it eaſie ſo hard to be attained?

1 Tim. 1. 15. Luke 15. 7. 10. Matth. 11. 28. v. 30.

If it be ſaid *that this Expreſſion*, that *the Righteous are ſcarcely ſaved*, is to be *underſtood* of ſome Sufferings, and Perſecutions, *which the Chriſtians were then to undergo*, and it was very hard *for any though never ſo righteous, to eſcape; and that to this*, v. 17. *referrs*, I anſwer, That this doth not clear the Difficulty; For from whence doth this Neceſſity of Suf-

Suffering ariſe? Is it not enough to repent and forſake our Sins, but we muſt undergo ſome Puniſhment for them in this Life, although God remits that of the World to come? But how is this conſiſtent with the Fulneſs of Chriſt's Satisfaction, and the Freeneſs of God's Remiſſion of Sins? And if God's Juſtice be ſatisfied and the Sins be forgiven, what need can there be that Perſons muſt here ſuffer for their Sins before they can come to Heaven?

So that for the clearing this Subject theſe things muſt be ſpoken to:

I. In what Senſe the *Righteous* are ſaid to be *ſcarcely ſaved.*

II. How this is conſiſtent with the Grace of the Goſpel.

III. What incouragement there is for us to hope for Salvation, when the *Righteous* are ſaid to be *ſcarcely ſaved.*

I. In what Senſe the *Righteous* are ſaid to be *ſcarcely ſaved.* That may be underſtood Two ways;

(1.) With reſpect to accidental Difficulties ariſing from the particular Circumſtances of Times and Seaſons.

(2.) With

(2.) With reſpect to the General Terms of Salvation, which are common to all Perſons and Times.

(1.) With reſpect to accidental Difficulties ariſing from the particular Circumſtances of Times and Perſons. For the Difficulties of Religion are not alike in all Times, nor to all Perſons; for they are not like a Geometrical Meaſure, which is always exactly the ſame; but rather like a Voyage at Sea, which is to be managed by the ſame Compaſs and to the ſame Port; but it ſometimes proves calm and pleaſant, and at other Times ſtormy and tempeſtuous. Which chiefly happens, when a Religion appears New, or goes about to reform the Old; for then it is ſure to meet with all the Oppoſition, which the Paſſions, and Intereſts, and Prejudices of partial Men can raiſe againſt it. It's true, he that *ſtills the Raging of the Sea, and the Madneſs of the People*, can, when he pleaſes, calm the moſt violent Paſſions of Mankind, and make way for the Reception of Truth in their Minds; but he thinks fit by ſuch means to try and diſcover what is in Men. Who never ſhew their Paſſions more violently and unreaſonably than when they are

mask'd

mask'd under a Pretence of Zeal againſt *Hereſie* and *Innovation*. For that blinds their Underſtandings, corrupts their Wills, inflames their Paſſions, hardens their Hearts, and ſhuts up all Bowels of Pity and Compaſſion towards Brethren. Thus it was among the *Jews* towards the Chriſtians, both in *Judæa*, and in the ſeveral Places of their Diſperſion: For they looked on them as Apoſtates and Hereticks, and treated them, not only with the utmoſt Scorn and Contempt, but with all the Fury and Rage imaginable, and where their own Power fell ſhort, they called in the Aſſiſtance of the *Roman* Governours, repreſenting the Chriſtians to them, as an Upſtart and pernicious Sect, ſeditious and turbulent, and therefore ought by all means to be ſuppreſt: By ſuch Inſinuations the poor Chriſtians in the *Eaſtern* Provinces of the *Jewiſh* Diſperſion, were miſerably haraſſed and proceeded againſt as Malefactours. Thus it was at that time when St. *Peter* wrote his Epiſtle to the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, who were ſcat-

1 Pet. 1.1. tered throughout *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Aſia*, and *Bithynia*, where there were abundance of *Jews*, and many Converts, but very hardly uſed among them.

them. St. *Peter* having been imployed much among them, (*the Apoſtleſhip of the Circumciſion being committed to him*) and being withdrawn into the Kingdom of *Parthia*, where he had planted a Church at *Babylon*, (not ſo deſolate at that time, as not to be ſufficient for ſuch a Number, as appears by *Strabo* and *Joſephus*) from thence he writes this excellent Epiſtle for the Advice and Comfort of the ſuffering Chriſtians. He adviſeth them to behave themſelves with great Prudence and Care of their Actions, to give no Advantage againſt themſelves, by doing any ill things; and then, if it

Gal. 2. 8.

Although *Babylon* were very much exhauſted, by the Neighbourhood of *Seleucia* firſt, and afterward of *Cteſiphon*; yet I ſee no Reaſon to conclude that *Babylon* was not then capable of having a Church in it, when S. *Peter* wrote this Epiſtle. For *Joſephus*, lib. 18. owns, that there was in *Babylon* πλῆθος Ἰουδαίων in the time when *Cyrenius* was ſent thither; and out of ſuch *a Multitude of Jews* a Church might eaſily be gathered. The Calamities which befell the *Jews* of thoſe Parts afterwards rather reach to the *Country* than the *City* of *Babylon*. And when ſuch Numbers of *Jews* are allowed to have been after them in *Cteſiphon*, *Nhardo* and *Niſibis*, which were all Cities in thoſe Parts, I ſee no cauſe to queſtion that there were great Numbers of *Jews* at that time in *Babylon*; ſince even in *Trajan*'s time, they are confeſſed to have been very numerous in *Meſopotamia Strabo*, lib. 16. ſaith, *that a great part of* Babylon *was deſerted in his time*, and ſo it might well be, and leave room enough for a Chriſtian Church to be there notwithſtanding. So that no reaſon appears ſufficient to me to take *Babylon* in any other ſenſe, than for the City generally known by that Name, without flying to any Myſtical Senſe, or a *Strong-place* in *Egypt* bearing that Name; there being leſs probability of a Church in a *Garriſon*, as *Strabo* deſcribes it, than in the Remainders of ſo great a City.

pleaſed God to call them out to ſuffer, they ought not to murmur, or complain, or miſtruſt his Gracious Provi-
1 Pet. 4. 19. dence towards them, but *commit themſelves to God in well-doing, as unto a faithfull Creatour.* And if they did think it hard for them to ſuffer theſe things, they ought to conſider, there was a wiſe Directour of them above, who had before-hand appointed ſuch a Series of Events, that although their Enemies rejoyced to ſee them ſuffer in the firſt Place, yet their Turn would come not long after, and then theſe Enemies of the Goſpel would feel the Severity of God's Wrath and Diſpleaſure againſt them. Which is the meaning of the foregoing Verſe.

For the time is come that Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God; and if it firſt begin at us, what ſhall the end be of them that obey not the Goſpel of God? i.e. Chriſt hath foretold Deſolation and Ruine to come upon the Jewiſh Nation, for rejecting him when he came to ſave them; but he withall ſaith, that *before*
Luke 21. 12. *theſe things, they ſhall lay their hands on you and perſecute you, delivering you up to the Synagogues, and into Priſons, being brought before Kings and Rulers for my Name's*

Name's ſake. Which implies a ſevere Perſecution of the Chriſtian Church, begun by the *Jews*, but carried on by the Governours of Kingdoms and Provinces. And therefore ſaith the Apoſtle, although *the time be now come that Judgment begins at the Houſe of God*, yet it will not end there; but that which is only a Cup of Trembling and Aſtoniſhment to them ſhall be a Cup of Fury and Deſtruction to the obſtinate and impenitent *Jews*. The caſe was hard to the poor Chriſtians, but it would be much more ſevere towards their cruel Perſecutours; for if the *Righteous*, whom God loves, meet with ſuch ſharp uſage by his Permiſſion for a time, the day will come when God will avenge the Cauſe of his ſuffering People, and make their *ungodly and perfidious* Enemies feel the ſmart of his diſpleaſure in ſuch manner that they ſhall not know where to hide themſelves, *Where ſhall the ſinner and ungodly appear.*

But that which I obſerve from hence is, that there are ſome accidental Circumſtances which depend on Divine Providence, which may make the condition of ſome Men, as to Salvation, much more difficult than that of others:

For it is no ſuch eaſie matter *to go through many Tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, i. e. to be content to be contemned and reproached as the worſt of Men; to be torn from Friends and Relations, and all the Comforts of Life; to be caſt into loathſome Priſons, and more loathſome Company in them; to be in continual expectation of ſuch cruel Uſage and Torments, as make Death to be look'd on as their beſt Friend and moſt ſeaſonable Deliverer. Acts 14. 22.

If ſufferings do not riſe ſo high, yet when Men cannot keep Faith and a good Conſcience, without hazarding the loſs of what Mankind are apt to ſet too great a value upon, their Eaſe, and Riches, and Expectations in this World, even theſe make it harder for ſuch Perſons to get to Heaven; becauſe Sincerity and Conſtancy are the neceſſary Conditions of it, which may be tried much more in ſome than it is in others. We muſt all have the ſame Journey's-end, if we hope to get to Heaven, but ſome may meet with a freer Road, and a calmer Seaſon, and better Company, in their Journey than others. However it happens we muſt go through all, and not be diſcourag'd at any appearance of Difficulties upon our way. But

But herein Mankind are apt to be deceived, as though all the Difficulties lay in a ſuffering Condition; whereas a ſoft, and careleſs, and voluptuous Life is rather more dangerous to their Souls, becauſe Perſons are leſs apt to ſuſpect their Danger. He that is ſet upon by force and violence endeavours to defend himſelf as well as he can; but he that is betrayed under a Pretence of Kindneſs is drawn into his Ruine before he is aware, and goes on chearfully to his own Deſtruction. Proſperity hath the true Nature of an *Opiate*, for it ſtupifies and pleaſes at the ſame time. The Temptations of the ſuffering Side are apt to allarm, awake, and rouze up the ſleepy Powers of the Soul; whereas the gentle and eaſie Condition of Life either lays them aſleep, by a kind of Intoxication, or ſo diverts them from all ſerious things, as puts them out of the very way to Heaven. For, the firſt thing in it is a ſteady and ſerious Reſolution of Mind to do what lies in them to go thither; which can never be done without a true Conſideration of the Vanities of this World, how pleaſing ſoever; and a fixed and ſettled Judgment, preferring the Happineſs of Heaven before

all the most alluring Pleasures of this Life.

So that the different Circumstances of Life do make the way of Salvation more difficult to some than to others.

But this is not all; for there are many things which make it more difficult to some than to others, which are of another Nature. Some Tempers are more flexible and pliable than others; more capable of hearkning to Reason; and more apt to reflect on their own Actions; whereas others are naturally stiff and obstinate, who stick as fast to an Opinion or Prejudice which they have once taken up, as if they were fatally determined to it; and such as these can hardly ever be convinced they are in an Errour, unless by a Power superiour to Nature. Some again, are very easily convinced of a Fault, but very hardly reclaimed; for that Facility of Temper which makes them easie to be convinced, lays them open to the next Temptation, which they are not able to withstand. These are always repenting and amending and beginning to reform, but without the Grace of God, not able to go through with it. Some are modest and bashfull Sinners, whom Fear and

and Shame may reſtrain; others are ſo hardned and impudent in their Wickedneſs, that they deny even the very firſt Principles of Morality as well as Religion, and not only refuſe to hearken to Reproof, but reject it with Scorn and Indignation. And it cannot be ſuppoſed that the Grace of God, working on Men's minds in a way ſuitable to them, ſhould have as eaſie an Admittance into one as into the other; for the one are like a Houſe with doors ſhut, but eaſily opened; the other like a Houſe not only ſhut, but bolted and barracado'd.

Again, ſome have had the Advantage of a Pious and Religious Education, by which the Principles of Piety and Vertue have made an early Impreſſion on their Minds, and have been a continual Check upon evil Inclinations; and if they have been too weak to ſubdue them, yet they have been ſtrong enough to prevent their Extravagancies, or to bring them to a ſpeedy Repentance, and to take up firmer Reſolutions; and ſuch are more eaſily brought to themſelves and ſettled in a vertuous Courſe of Life. But the Generality of Mankind, thro' a wretched Careleſneſs, mind not the early Improvement of their Children in what is

good; and what Education they give them tends to any thing more than the planting the Senſe of God, and true Religion, and Vertue, in them. It were well, if they would but let Nature alone in their Children; but inſtead of that, they often place ſuch about them, who humour them in their worſt Inclinations, and give them an early Taſte of Profaneneſs and Irreligion; ſo that when they come into the World, they run into all Manner of Wickedneſs, and commit it with Greedineſs, having ſo quick a Reliſh of it; and then indeed it is a very hard Matter to bring them to Repentance; for that is to take Shame and Diſhonour to themſelves, to ſay they have been Fools, and have done wickedly; and rather than do this, they chuſe to go on in their Impieties, *and treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath.*

Thoſe who magnifie the Freedom of Will in Mankind in this degenerate State, ſeem to conſider them only in Theory and Speculation; not as they are, but as they ought to have been. It is like that which they call the Spring in ſome Bodies, which are apt to dilate and expand themſelves, but may be eaſily

ſily oppreſſed with ſuch a weight as makes it impoſſible for them to enlarge themſelves till it be removed. There is no doubt in Mankind, conſidered in it ſelf, a Power of acting according to Reaſon, which is the trueſt Freedom, (for a Power of acting otherwiſe is Weakneſs and Folly,) but what through the Natural Propenſity to Evil; what through the Power of bad Examples; what through the violence of ſome Tempers and Paſſions; what through the Cloudineſs of ſome Underſtandings, from bodily Diſtempers; what through the ſtrength of evil Habits, and corrupt Diſpoſitions, there is ſcarce ſuch a thing as Freedom of Will left, eſpecially as to Matters of Salvation. So that if the Scripture did not ſo plainly expreſs the Neceſſity of Divine Grace for the Converſion of Sinners (as it doth,) the mere Conſideration of the ſtate of humane Nature would make me believe it, ſuppoſing that any Part of Mankind be deſigned to be fitted for Heaven. For although the Difficulties be not alike in all, yet, of one kind or other, they are ſuch as cannot be overcome by our ſelves, without the Power of Divine Grace *Exciting*, *Preventing*, and *Aſſiſting* of us.

(2.) Ha-

(2.) Having thus ſhewed what Difficulties there are which ariſe from the different Circumſtances of Times and Perſons, I am now to conſider thoſe which ariſe from the Terms of Salvation, which are common to all Perſons and Times.

Here we muſt ſuppoſe Salvation to be the thing aimed at, as the chief End or Happineſs of ſuch Men; and here are two Kinds of Difficulties to be enquired into;

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Purſuit of Happineſs.

(2.) Such as immediately relate to this Kind of Happineſs.

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Purſuit of Happineſs: For Happineſs is not a thing of Chance or Neceſſity, but a Matter of Choice and Deſign. It is a vulgar Miſtake (and I wiſh it were only among the Vulgar) to account thoſe happy, who are fortunate: But this Notion of Happineſs was unanimouſly rejected by all the Ancient Moraliſts. Some of them indeed have thought it repugnant to common Senſe, to call thoſe happy who were under great Calamities, *i. e.* who were, in the Sence of Mankind, miſerable: But then they

they utterly denied, that the beſt outward Circumſtances could make a Man happy; for that muſt depend upon the Temper of a Man's mind, and his Improvement in Vertue. Theſe are ſome things which the Moraliſts agreed in, which may be of great uſe to us for clearing the Chriſtian Doctrine in this Matter about the Difficulty of attaining Salvation.

(1.) That Happineſs did conſiſt in one uniform Deſign of Life, *i. e.* that a Man muſt chuſe one proper and chief End to himſelf, and ſo order his Thoughts and Actions that he may attain it. And therefore the diſſolute and careleſs Liver, that minds or thinks of nothing but Eating, and Drinking, and Sleeping, and paſſing away his Time, was no more capable of Happineſs than a Brute, which exceeds him in that which he accounts the Happineſs of Life.

(2.) That there muſt be a carefull and attentive Mind to purſue this Deſign. And that is by keeping cloſe to thoſe Maxims, which were laid down as neceſſary to attain it. For, according to their different Notions, they had different Maxims, or Rules of Practice, either as to Vertue or Pleaſure,

and

and as Men did observe these, they were nearer to their Happiness: But if they broke their Rules, they must blame themselves if they missed of it.

(3.) That any Man who desired to be happy, must above all things take pains about himself: For without that they concluded it impossible for a Man to be happy, let his outward Condition in the World be what it would: For that was too uncertain a Foundation to build such a Structure upon. Therefore it was necessary for any one that pretended to Happiness, to have a true Notion of what conduced to it in his Mind; and to bring his Passions into Order. For all the World cannot make one whose Passions are violent and extravagant, to be happy; no more than him to be a sound and healthfull Man, that hath a Fever, and a Dropsie, and Convulsions, at the same time upon him. For the Violence of Lust is an inward burning Fever; Covetousness, or an insatiable Desire of Riches, a perpetual Dropsie, which encreases the Thirst by an endeavour to quench it; an excessive Anger is a Convulsion of those Powers of the Soul which ought to be sedate, and composed, in any one who pretends to

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Happineſs. But when they conſidered the Force of natural Inclinations, they found it was no eaſie Matter to make the unreaſonable Part to be governed by the Reaſonable. For the leſs of Reaſon, the more Wilfulneſs and Stubbornneſs; and therefore the harder to be brought to Reaſon and to be govern'd by it. And herein lay the main Difficulty; and after all their Arguments, and Rules, and Directions, humane Nature was found too refractary to ſubmit; and the Violence of Man's Paſſions overthrew all the plauſible Schemes of Happineſs which the Philoſophers had ſet up. To which I add,

(4.) That thoſe who conſulted moſt the Eaſe and Pleaſure of Mankind, were forced to put Men upon ſome hard and unpleaſant things to make any thing like Happineſs to conſiſt in Pleaſure. For they caſt off all Riot and Exceſs, all Intemperance and Luxury, becauſe the Pain which followed exceeded the Pleaſure; and therefore they made Temperance and Chaſtity neceſſary to the true Pleaſure of Life. They reduced the Happineſs of Pleaſure to a fixed and ſetled State, and ſo took it off from that which was only ſenſual. They brought Men's

Men's desires within so narrow a Compass, that the true Lovers of Pleasure would abhorr such Confinements as they made necessary. And although they could never conquer the Fears of invisible Powers, and of Death, yet they thought no Happiness was to be had without it. So that all were agreed, that it was impossible to attain to any thing that looked like Happiness without some real Difficulty, which was necessary to be undergone, altho' the Success were uncertain.

(2.) Let us now consider the Difficulties relating to Salvation, or that Happiness which Christians expect. And here I shall shew,

(1.) That it is far more reasonable to go through Difficulties, for the sake of it.

(2.) That they are not such, but that we may reasonably hope to overcome them.

(1.) It is more reasonable to expect Difficulties in the way of Salvation. For the more excellent and desirable the Happiness is, the more it is worth the while for us to take pains about it; especially when there is a Certainty of attaining it. The Moralists had but very

very dark, and confuſed, and uncertain Notions of Happineſs; ſomething they ſaw, but with a very glimmering light: They found that all Men deſired it, and wiſe Men ſought after it; but wherein it lay, and how to be attained, they could not agree. The moſt conſidering Men were convinced it muſt be in the beſt Part of our ſelves, and that is our Minds, and in the greateſt Perfection of that, *viz.* Vertue and Goodneſs. But they met with inſuperable Difficulties in the way to it, and the beſt among them ſadly lamented the State of humane Nature, after all the Pains and Endeavours they had uſed to rectifie their Opinions, and to ſubdue their Paſſions. For they found it too reſtiff and untractable, too much under the Sway and Dominion of the ſenſitive Appetite, for them ever to hope by the mere Power of Reaſon to bring it into ſuch Subjection, as to pretend to a total Conqueſt. And thoſe who refined Pleaſure ſo much, as to make it a Happineſs fit for Mankind to own, did make a Happineſs juſt as they made their Gods, *viz.* a Fine, Subtil, Airy, Pleaſant No-thing, or that had no Solidity in it: For the *Epicurean* Happineſs, with all its Refine-

ments,

ments, was rather a Matter of Speculation than Practice; and after all was not worth so much Pains about it, but like the Gourd, which after its paring, and cleansing, and dressing, is fit only to be cast upon the Dunghill.

But it cannot be said that the Happiness offered to Christians is of such a Nature: For it is really the best, the most valuable and desirable Good, not promised to be enjoyed in this mean, despicable, and uncertain State of Life, but reserved for a more free, spiritual and continuing State. So our Apostle calls it, *an Inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.* Such is the Condition of the World without us here, and of the Passions and Infirmities within us, that it is a vain thing to expect a true Happiness to be enjoyed in this Life; the utmost we can hope for, is to be prepared for a better; and God knows there is difficulty enough in that. We have Hearts so vain and sensual, so addicted to the Pleasures and Impertinencies of this World, so prepossessed with the Objects of Sense, that it is no easie Matter to bring them so much as in earnest to consider of another World.

1 Pet. 1.4.

But

But it is yet harder to fix the Thoughts of it upon our Minds so as to make a deep Impression upon them, as they must do, if we make the Happiness of Heaven our chief End and Design. Supposing that Paradise were still upon Earth in its first Glory, and to be found by the Description which *Moses* gives of it; a Man may think often concerning it, where it lies, what the Rivers are by which it is to be discovered; but all this amounts but to a mere Speculation: But suppose that he takes up a Resolution to go thither, what other kind of thoughts hath he then about it, as to the Truth and Certainty of the Place; and the Way that leads thither, and the Difficulties he is like to meet with? Which make another kind of Impression than the former dry Speculation did. If a Man doth not think Heaven worth all the Pains and Difficulties which lie in our way to it, he never yet had one serious and becoming thought concerning it. For the Happiness proposed is really so great and invaluable, that the more we think of it, the more we shall esteem it, and the more we shall despise and triumph over the greatest Difficulties in order to it; it being no less than

the perfect Enjoyment of the most perfect Good, in a most perfect State of Life, and nothing can be desired by humane Nature greater than this.

(2.) The Difficulties in our Way to Salvation are not such, but we may reasonably hope to overcome them; *i. e.* if we set our selves about it; otherwise a very mean Difficulty will appear too great for us. Therefore we must suppose not only a willing Mind, but a firm Resolution to do what lies in us. And there are two things to shew that we may hope to overcome them;

(1.) That the most difficult Duties are in themselves reasonable to be performed by us.

(2.) That God offers his gracious Assistance for the performance of them.

(1.) That the most difficult Duties are in themselves reasonable. I mean such whose Difficulty doth not arise from accidental outward Circumstances; but from a Respect to the present State and Condition of humane Nature. Such as,

(1.) *True Repentance*; which is one of the hardest Works of a Man's life, when he hath been long engaged in a Course of sinning against Conscience.

It

It is not hard for such a one to be made sensible that he hath done amiss; for he that acts against his Judgment is, as *Aristotle* observes, *apt to repent*, i.e. to find fault with himself for his own Actions, and to resolve to amend. There is a sort of Displeasure against Sin, which is consistent with the Practice of it, which is called by the Casuists, *Attritio Impœnitentium*; but they say it is without a Purpose of forsaking it, if there be such a Purpose that they say is *Attritio Pœnitentium*; but if it be an ineffectual Purpose, the Scripture no where calls it *Repentance*. For as long as the habitual Practice continues, it is certain that Man's love to his Sin exceeds his Hatred of it; and what Repentance can that be which is consistent with a prevailing Love of Sin? When Persons were first made Christians, their Repentance was easily discerned, whether true or false, because it was a publick and solemn Renunciation of all their former Sins; but when Men have accustomed themselves to sin under a Profession to renounce their Sins, it is a harder Matter to find out the Sincerity of their Repentance as to those Sins. And here a difference must be made as to the Na-

Ὁ ἀκρατὴς μεταμελητικὸς πᾶς Nicom. *l.* 7. *c.* 8.

Inter cætera mala, hoc quoque habet stultitia proprium, semper incipit vivere. Sen. *Ep.* 13.

ture and Kind of Sins: For there are ſome Sins which all agree to be Sins, yet it is a hard Matter to convince Perſons that they are guilty of them, ſuch as *Hypocriſie*, *Schiſm*, and *Idolatry*, which Men will find ſomething to excuſe themſelves from, notwithſtanding the cleareſt Evidence againſt them. Some are ſuch Strangers to themſelves, that they do not ſuſpect themſelves for thoſe Sins which others eaſily diſcern in them, as is common in the Caſe of *Pride*, and *Envy*, and *Covetouſneſs*, and *Superſtition*. It cannot be ſuppoſed that Perſons ſhould ſo particularly repent of ſuch Sins which they are not ſenſible of; but where Self-love blinds it cannot excuſe. And where ſuch evil Habits prevail, Perſons muſt repent, and ſearch, and examine themſelves in order to a particular Repentance. There are other Sins which are really perpetual Burthens to a good Mind, but it knows not how to get rid of them with the utmoſt Care; ſuch as inward Motions to Sin, ſudden Heats and Surpriſes, mixt Infirmities, Coldneſs in Devotion, Diſtractions in Prayer, and many Omiſſions of Perſonal Duties; in ſuch Caſes as theſe, if we do not allow Sincerity of Repentance with-

without through Amendment, we make a general Repentance insignificant, and make the Condition of many good Men desperate; for none can be saved without true Repentance. And if there can be no true Repentance without actual forsaking all such Kinds of Sins, there is no such thing as true Repentance to be found. But there are other Sins of a more dangerous and malignant Nature, which argue a very bad Mind; such as *Malice* and *Hatred*, *a rooted Aversion to what is Good*; and *a strong Inclination to Evil.* There are some Sins that are gross and notorious, of which St. *Paul* saith, *The lusts of the Flesh are manifest*; *i.e.* such Sins are easily known to be Sins, and Men's Consciences condemn them even while they commit them; such as *Murther*, *Adultery*, *Intemperance*, *Injustice*, *Perjury*, and such like. Of which the Apostle after declares, *That they who do such things shall never come to Heaven.* Therefore as to them, such a Repentance is necessary as implies not merely a dislike and sorrow for them, but a thorough Change of a Man's Mind, and the Course of his Life, with respect to them. And surely it is no easie Matter to new mold the Temper

Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Eph. 5. 5, 6.

of ones Mind, and to turn the Tide of our Actions; to break off our beloved Sins, and to bring forth Fruits worthy of Repentance. This is indeed a hard Work; but yet it is a moſt reaſonable Work. It is hard, but it is like the taking violent Phyſick in ſome Diſeaſes, where the Humour muſt be purged out, or the Party muſt die; the Uneaſineſs is not to be conſidered, but the Neceſſity; and in ſuch a Caſe the Mind cannot be at eaſe till it be done. So that the very Difficulty of Repentance lays the Foundation for greater Peace of Mind afterwards. And who will think much of ſuch a Difficulty, which is ſo neceſſary to Peace with God and his own Conſcience?

(2.) *The love of God above all things.* This is ſo fundamental a Duty, that we cannot place our Happineſs in God without it. For if we do not love God above all things, we muſt love ſomewhat elſe ſo; and whatever we love above all things, that we make our Happineſs. But I am afraid the greateſt Part of the World love all things above him: For we are to judge of Men's love and eſteem by what they court, and purſue, and deſire, and delight in; it is impoſſible there

ſhould

should be such a Love of God, where the Stream of the Affections and Course of Actions run quite another way; I mean, to the Vanities of this World, of which the Apostle hath said, *If any Man loves it, the love of the Father is not in him.* 1 Joh. 2. 15. But this is a hard Point: For some degree of love to this World is allowable; else how can we thank God for the Comforts of it? And all Persons who know God do grant, that his Perfections are far above all the World, and therefore they seem to have a Value and Esteem for him above it. We must here distinguish a notional Esteem from that which is Practical. A notional Esteem implies no more than a mere Conviction that God must exceed all the Excellencies which are scattered in the Creatures; but a practical Esteem is, when the Acts of our Souls towards him are suitable to the Apprehensions we have in our Minds concerning him. When we adore his infinite Perfections, and delight in the Meditation of them; when we desire to do all things pleasing to him, and avoid what we know to offend him; when we believe, and hope, and trust in him, and commit our selves to his Conduct in

this World, in hopes of being happy with him in another. This is the Love of God above all things; but alas! Where is this Love of God to be found? It is no very hard Matter to work up a heated and devout Imagination to the Fancy of Raptures and Ecstasies and Mystical Unions; but after all, *This is the* 1 Joh. 5. 3. *love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* As the true Love of a Prince is not to flatter and admire him, and watch for his Smiles; but to observe his Directions, and obey his Orders, and to do what is most for his Service. And although such a Love of God be hard to those whose Hearts are full of carnal Affections, and are taken up with the Follies and Vanities of this World, yet we cannot take one true step in the way to Heaven without the Love of God. For even those who have most corrupted the Doctrine of Repentance do confess, that there can be no true Contrition for Sin, which is not founded on the Love of God as the Principle of it; and however they have dangerously flattered and deceived those who are so weak to believe them, that Attrition with the Sacrament of Penance is sufficient to put Men into the State of Grace; yet St. *Peter's* Keys must

must have an extraordinary Virtue, if they can change Nature into Grace, or Fear into Love, or mere Horrour of Conſcience into true Repentance.

But although ſuch a Love of God above all things be ſo hard a thing to Minds prepoſſeſſed with the Love of other things; yet no one can deny that it is the moſt reaſonable Duty in the World. The very Thoughts of God, if they are ſuch as we ought to have, imply, that he is the beſt, the wiſeſt, the moſt perfect Being, and therefore the moſt amiable and deſirable Object. And whither then ſhould the moſt Natural Stream of our Affections run, but towards him? What do we mean to ſuffer ſo much Earth and Filthineſs to obſtruct the free Paſſage of them in their moſt proper Courſe? What can we meet with in this deceitfull World, that can bear the leaſt Proportion to ſuch infinite Goodneſs? Oh what a difference is there between our Reaſon and our Love? We verily believe that God deſerves our Love above all things, and yet how ſmall a ſhare hath he in it? We love what we profeſs to deſpiſe above all things, *viz.* our Sins and this vain World; and we really too much deſpiſe what we ſtill pro-

profeſs to love above all things, *viz.* God and our Eternal Happineſs. O miſerable Condition of Humanity! Made to be happy, and yet fond of Miſery; loving what's vain, and yet deſpiſing Vanity; hating what's good, and yet accounts it beſt; and therefore fitteſt for our Choice and Love. The Love of God above all things is ſo juſt and reaſonable, that thoſe who do it leaſt approve it as the moſt excellent Imployment of our Minds; and thoſe that do it moſt, think they fall ſhort of what God deſerves from them. The more we know of God, the more we know that we ought to love and delight in him; and all our Difficulty in the Practice of it can never make us think it is unreaſonable to love him above all things, without whom nothing can make us happy, and who alone can do it.

(3.) *Univerſal Holineſs of Heart and Life.* If this were not neceſſary to Salvation, our Apoſtle would not have preſſed it with ſo much earneſtneſs as he doth; *As obedient Children, not faſhioning your ſelves according to the former luſts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy*

1 Pet. 1. 14, 15, 16.

holy in all Manner of Converſation; becauſe it is written, *be ye holy, for I am holy.* Again, *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the Soul.* And again, *That he no longer ſhould live the reſt of his time in the fleſh, to the luſts of Men, but to the Will of God.* This is a hard ſaying to Mankind, who part with nothing ſo hardly as with their Sins; yet theſe muſt be parted with, if ever we hope to get to Heaven. I do not ſay, that a Perfection in Holineſs is required, (for that were to ſuppoſe Happineſs in this World, ſince there can be no perfect Holineſs without it,) but there muſt be a conſtant, uniform, and ſincere Endeavour after it; by avoiding all known and wilfull Sins, and doing all our Duties to God in ſuch a Manner as our Conſcience cannot charge us with groſs Neglect or Inſincerity. There are ſome things we cannot ſay are down-right Sins; yet if they lead to them; if they indiſpoſe our Minds to God, and his Service; if they tend to Lightneſs and Vanity, and make us more eaſie to entertain the Devil's Temptations, we ought to avoid them as the Snares of the

1 Pet. 2. 11.

4. 2.

the Devil. So, on the other side, there are some things which we cannot say are plain, and express, and necessary Duties of Religion, yet they tend so much to keep up the Life and Spirit of it, that a general Design of Holiness is enough to recommend them. As to positive Duties of Religion, we cannot exactly fix the Time, and Measure, and Season of their Performance, which must vary according to Circumstances; but this we can say, that the more Persons set themselves to the Practice of Holiness, and the greater Preparation they make for another World, the more they will delight in the Performance of God's Service, and the more ready to embrace any Opportunities for it. Those who would have all Religious Duties determined as to the Circumstances of them, are like Men who would have punctual Rules set down, how often two Friends should converse with each other, and how long time they are to stay together. True Friendship will need none of those things, but will incline them to embrace the best Opportunities for mutual Conversation, lest too long distance beget a Coldness first, and then the

Friend-

Friendſhip diſſolves. It is no hard matter to pray as far as words go; but to pray with Zeal and Devotion, to attend upon God with that ſerioufneſs of Mind we ought to do, will require our utmoſt Attention. And it is no eaſie matter to keep our Minds compoſed and fit to converſe with God in Prayer, and other ſolemn Duties of Religion. But as hard as this appears to us, it is moſt fit and reaſonable that we ſhould do it: For what an unbecoming thing it is to worſhip God in a careleſs, trifling, perfunctory Manner; as though nothing leſs deſerved the imploying the Vigour of our Minds about, than the Service of God. But how can we love him with all our Hearts, if we do not ſerve him with all our Minds and Strength.

(4.) *Reſignation of our ſelves to God.* This the Apoſtle calls *caſting all our Care upon him.* 1 Pet. 5.7. This is a very wiſe Duty if we can attain to it, becauſe it eaſes our Minds of many Fears and Perplexities, both as to our ſelves and others: But it is no eaſie thing to ſet our Minds free from ſolicitous thoughts, about poſſible Evils. We cannot mend our Condition, nor prevent what is determined by

by our most anxious Care; but we may enjoy our selves with far greater Peace and Tranquillity, if we can be content to commit our selves to the best Conduct, and that is of him that governs the World. And whatever strugglings we may find within our selves about it, yet the more we search, and weigh, and consider things, the more we shall be satisfied, that the Resignation of our selves to God, as to all our Concernments in this World, is the best means to calm our Passions, and to abate our Fears, to prevent our Impatience, and so to attain to that *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is with God of great Price.*

1 Pet. 3. 4.

But if all these Duties be so necessary to our being saved, and we lie under such Difficulties as to the Performance of them, their appearing to be reasonable makes our Condition so much worse: For to find it so hard to do what we are convinced is most reasonable to be done, is one of the worst Circumstances of our Condition. It's true we do not want Faculties of Understanding and Will; but what then, if our Moral Indispositions make these useless to our Spiritual Advantage? A

Man

Man that is like to be ſtifled in a large Veſſel full of Downy Feathers, cannot complain of the hardneſs of what he lies upon, for all things feel ſoft and eaſie about him, yet he may be ſtifled with them; our evil Habits, and corrupt Inclinations, have nothing that feels hard or troubleſome to us; but if we cannot overcome them, they will certainly ruine and deſtroy us. There is therefore a Neceſſity of a higher Principle of Divine Grace to enable us to break through all theſe Difficulties. Which Grace is ſo abundantly promiſed by the Goſpel to thoſe who ſeek it, that it comes at laſt to be our own fault, if we be not ſaved.

II. And this helps us to reconcile the Difficulty of Salvation, with the Eaſineſs of the Terms of the Goſpel: For that which is not only hard, but impoſſible to us, in our own ſtrength, may, by the mighty Power of Divine Grace, become not only poſſible but eaſie to us: And withall thoſe things are accounted eaſie which bring eaſe, and that is a light Burthen which rids one of a far harder. And thus the Commands of Chriſt, however hard in them-

themſelves to us, yet being conſidered with the Grace of the Goſpel, and the bleſſed Effect of inward Peace, which follows ſincere Obedience, even *his Yoke*, which keeps us moſt in, may be ſaid to be *eaſie, and his Burthen*, which ſits hardeſt upon us, may be ſaid to be *light*.

III. And from hence we ſee what Encouragement there is ſtill for us to hope to be ſaved, if we be *righteous*.

There is none for the *Ungodly and Sinner*; i. e. for the profane Contemner of God and Religion, or for the wicked Liver. For however they may flatter themſelves with vain and preſumptuous hopes, there is no more ground to think that the *Righteous ſhall be ſaved*, than that the *Ungodly and Sinner ſhall not*: For both are alike made known by the ſame Word of God.

" But what Comfort is it (may ſome " ſay) to hear that *the Righteous are* " *ſcarcely ſaved*, when we are ſo con- " ſcious to our ſelves of our own Un- " righteouſneſs? If we could think our " ſelves *righteous* before God, there " were ſome hopes, but we are Sin- " ners; and if we ſhould deny or ex- " cuſe it, we ſhould be ſo much more

" ſo,

" ſo; what hope can there be then for
" us?

To this I ſhall anſwer, and conclude.

(1.) The *Righteous* here ſpoken of were once great Sinners; for St. *Peter* mentions *their former luſts, and working the Will of the Gentiles in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries.* 1 Pet. 1. 14. 4. 3. Yet theſe are ſaid, *to be redeemed from their vain Converſation by the precious Blood of Chriſt; and to be begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible*, &c. 1. 18, 19. 1. 3, 4.

There is therefore, not merely a Poſſibility of being ſaved, but a juſt and grounded Hope, if we renounce our former Sins, and become righteous, according to the Terms of the Goſpel; *i. e.* If we ſincerely repent of our Sins, and turn from them, and live the reſt of our time, not to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of God. But if God had declared, that he expected from Mankind an entire and perfect Righteouſneſs without any Sin, it were all one, as to publiſh a general and irreverſible Decree of Damnation to all, *for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God.* From whence the Apoſtle Rom. 3. 23.

well argues, that Men cannot ſave themſelves: But God of his infinite Pity and Mercy towards the deplorable Condition of Mankind, hath found out a way to ſave them, *by the Redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus, whom he hath made a propitiation for their ſins.* Although therefore as to our ſelves we have no hopes, yet herein God hath magnified his abundant Love towards Sinners, that although they have ſinned to a high Degree, yet if they be ſo far wearied with the Burthen of their Sins, as to take Chriſt's Yoke upon them, then he hath promiſed Eaſe and Reſt to their Souls, which is the greateſt Bleſſing in the World, eſpecially to repenting Sinners.

" But (ſome may again ſay) we " have repented and ſinned, and ſin- " ned and repented again, and can " hardly yet tell which will get the " better at laſt; we cannot ſay that we " have entirely ſubmitted our Necks " to Chriſt's Yoke, for that requires a " great deal more than we can per- " form; how then can we be thought " Righteous?

I anſwer therefore,

(2.) Where

(2.) Where there is a ſincere and honeſt Endeavour to pleaſe God, and keep his Commandments, although Perſons fail in the Manner of doing it, God will accept of ſuch as righteous: But where they pleaſe themſelves in their Unrighteouſneſs, and go on in it, hoping that God will accept ſome kind of Repentance in ſtead of it; or, where there hath been long ſtruggling, and many Acts of Repentance, and the Intereſt of Sin prevails; the Caſe of ſuch is very dangerous, but not deſperate. For as long as there is hopes of a true Repentance, there is of Salvation; and there is ſtill hopes of Repentance where Men's hearts are not hardned by an incorrigible Stiffneſs: For, according to the beſt Meaſures we can take by the Rules of the Goſpel, none are effectually excluded from the Hopes of Salvation, but ſuch as exclude themſelves by their own Impenitency.

SERMON IV.

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March *the* 23d. 16$\frac{12}{13}$.

Eccleſiaſtes XI. 9.

Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment.

IF *Solomon* had ſaid, *Rejoyce not, O young man, in thy youth, neither let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth;*

youth; walk not in the way of thine heart, nor in the ſight of thine eyes; for know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into Judgment, the Senſe had been ſo eaſie and plain, that there had been no Appearance of Difficulty in reconciling one Part with the other. For the whole had been look'd upon but as a neceſſary and ſeaſonable Admonition to ſuch who by the Heats of Youth, and Strength of Inclination, and Allurements of the World, are too apt to be tranſported with the Love of ſenſual Pleaſures. And this had been very becoming the wiſe Man towards the Concluſion of his Book, wherein he had not only before ſet forth the ſeveral Vanities of humane Life; but ſo ſoon after, bids Men *Remember their Creatour in the days of their Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh of which they ſhall ſay they have no pleaſure in them*, i. e. in the days wherein they are moſt apt to *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes.* For he knew very well, that nothing is ſo powerfull a Check and Reſtraint upon Men's Inclinations to Sin, as the ſerious Conſideration of that God that gave them their Beings, and will Ch. 12. 1.

bring them to an Account for their Actions.

But how then comes he in this Verse to seem rather to give a Permission to young Men in the time of Youth to indulge themselves in their Mirth and Vanity? *Rejoyce, O young Man, in thy Youth*, &c.

Some think that the wise Man only derides and exposes them for their Folly in so doing; but that seems not agreeable with the grave and serious Advice which follows. And we find nothing like *Irony* or *Sarcasm* in any Part of the foregoing Book; for he begins it with a Tragical Exclamation against the Vanities of humane Life;

Ch. 1. 2. *Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher, Vanity of Vanities: all is Vanity.* And he pursues his Argument by a particular Induction of the most tempting and pleasing Vanities of Life; and particularly all sorts of sensual Delights; as

Ch. 2. 1. *Mirth* and *Jollity* in the first Place, then

v. 3. *Wine* and *Musick*, fine *Palaces*, curious

v. 4,5,6,7. *Vineyards*, *Gardens* and *Pools*, a great Retinue, and, which was needfull to

v. 8. maintain all this, *Abundance of Silver and Gold.* But what a melancholy Reflection doth he make on all these Pleasures

sures of Life? *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit.* What incouragement then could the wise Man, after so much Experience of the World, give to young Men here in the Text, to *rejoyce in the days of their Youth, and to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes?* i. e. to pursue *Vanity*, and to lay the Foundation for greater *Vexation of Spirit*, when they come to reflect on their own Follies. v. 11.

What then is the meaning of these words? For this, we are to observe, that the Preacher having declared his own main Scope and Design in the beginning and conclusion of his Book, brings in sometimes the different Senses which Mankind are apt to have concerning the Happiness of Life. And that is the Reason that we meet with such different Expressions concerning it.

In one Place it is said, that *there is no better thing under the Sun, than to eat and drink, and to be merry*; but in another, he saith, *Sorrow is better than laughter, and by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.* Ch. 8, 15. Ch. 7. 3.

Ch. 9. 2. In one Place he ſaith, *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked:* But in another, *That it ſhall be well with them* Ch. 8. 12, 13. *that fear the Lord, but it ſhall not be well with the wicked.*

How can ſuch Paſſages as theſe be reconciled, if we look on them as expreſſing the Senſe of the ſame Perſon? But if we allow them to be the different Notions of two ſorts of Men in this World, they are eaſie to be underſtood, although not to be reconciled. And the one ſort is of thoſe who place all Happineſs in this Life, without regard to Religion or Vertue, or another World; and the other of thoſe, who look on this Life only as a Paſſage to another; and that all Perſons ought to behave themſelves here, ſo as conduces moſt to their Happineſs hereafter.

And according to theſe different *Schemes*, we have in the words of the Text two very different ſorts of Counſel and Advice to young Men.

I. The firſt proceeds upon the Suppoſition that all the Happineſs of Man lies in this Life, and in the Enjoyment of the ſenſual Pleaſures of it; *Rejoyce, O young*

young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth; and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes. We have no other Rule here given but *the sight of the eye, and the way of the heart*; i. e. outward Appearance and inward Inclination; and these are the beloved Rules of the most sensual and voluptuous Persons, and they judge of Happiness only by the pursuit of them. Here is nothing mention'd of *Reason or Conscience*, or a regard to Vertue in the Restraint of Natural Inclinations: Nay, here is nothing of that Severity which *Epicurus* himself thought necessary towards the maintaining of a pleasant State of Life; which he granted could never be done without some Restraint of Men's Appetites and Inclinations to the Pleasures of Sense; and it is not to be imagined, that *Solomon* should give young Men greater Liberty than the corruptest Moralists did. Therefore I cannot look upon these words as a *Permission* for them to do what is here expressed; but as a full Description of that Method of Living, which the jolly and voluptuous Corrupters of Youth would instruct them in, *Rejoyce, O young Man,*

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in thy Youth, and let thine heart chear thee, &c.

II. We have here the moſt powerfull Check and Reſtraint laid upon all theſe ſenſual Inclinations of Youth. *But know thou that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* Which words are the wiſe Man's *Correction* of the foregoing *Liberty*, or the Curb which Reaſon and Religion give to the purſuit of Natural Inclinations, wherein every Word hath its force, and ought to make a deep Impreſſion upon us; For,

(1.) *Know thou:* Thine is not then the ſame caſe with Creatures that have no underſtanding; they are not capable of any Check from themſelves, having no Law of Reaſon or Conſcience within them to controul or govern their ſenſual Deſires; but God hath given thee not meerly a brutal Appetite, but a rational Soul, capable of underſtanding the differences of Good and Evil, and the Reaſons why ſome things which appear pleaſant are very diſagreeing to the Principles of humane Nature; *i.e.* to that Order, Decency, Modeſty, and Regularity, which the more

more elevated Frame and Capacity of Mankind do require.

(2.) *For all theſe things*; as light and vain as you eſteem them, as ſoon as they are over and forgotten by you, as ſecretly and cloſely as they are committed, as much as you endeavour to palliate and excuſe them, yet but *for all theſe things God will certainly bring thee into Judgment*. Therefore you have all the Reaſon in the world to conſider what you do, ſince *every thing will be brought to Judgment, whether it be good or evil*, as *Solomon* concludes this Book. Which ſhews the great regard God hath to the Good or Evil of our Actions; and if the great Judge of the World hath ſo, certainly we ought to have it, and never think our ſelves at liberty to do what we pleaſe, in gratifying our Luſts, and purſuing our Natural Inclinations to Evil. Ch. 12.14.

(3) *God will do it.* If there were no God to call thee to an Account, yet there are ſome Actions of Vertue ſo agreeable to Mankind, and ſome Vices ſo loathſome and deformed, that there would be ſufficient cauſe for them to love the one and to abhorr the other. If we could ſuppoſe ſuch a Frame of things

things and such sorts of Beings as we now see, and no God to make them, (which is most absurd and unreasonable,) yet we must suppose these Beings to have Natures and Properties distinct from each other; so that we could not imagine Men to become Beasts, and therefore they must not act like them, but preserve that *Decorum* or Agreeableness in their Actions which is suitable to the peculiar Excellencies of humane Nature. And there are some Sins so much below the Dignity thereof, that no Circumstances, no Suppositions, can make them fitting for Mankind to commit them; which shews that the Nature of Good and Evil is no Arbitrary thing, but is founded in the very Frame of our Beings, and in the Respects we owe to our selves and to one another. And since there is an Infinite and Supreme Being which hath absolute Power and Command over us, and gives us both our Beings and the Comforts of our Lives, it is most absurd to suppose it not to be a fault to hate his Goodness, or to despise his Mercy; or to slight his Power, and to contemn his Authority: For in all these there is something repugnant

to

to the common Senſe of Mankind, and to all Principles of true Honour and Juſtice. And there are ſuch common Principles of Morality ariſing from our neceſſary Relation to God and each other, which are of ſo clear and convincing Evidence, that every one that conſiders them will grant that wicked Men may as well go about to diſpute their Beings as their Sins; and may as eaſily prove that they are not, but only appear to be, as that no Actions are really evil, but only by falſe Glaſſes appear ſo to be. But however vain Men may deceive themſelves, *God will not be mocked*; for he not only ſees and knows all our Actions, but he will bring us to an Account for them.

(4.) *God will bring thee into Judgment.* It is a dreadfull Conſideration to a Sinner, that God knows all his falſe Steps, all his ſecret Sins, all his Falſhood and Diſſimulation with God and Men: And there is nothing which Men of Art and Deſign hate more, than to be diſcover'd and found out in all their double and deceitfull Dealings; but to have theſe not only privately diſcover'd, but expoſed and laid open to the view of the World; and not only

ly so, but to have every Circumstance examin'd, and every Action scanned, and that by the great Judge of all the World, whom nothing can escape, nothing can deceive, nothing can withstand; whose Justice is inflexible, whose Knowledge is incomprehensible, whose Power is irresistible, and whose Vengeance is insupportable: This we cannot but imagine must strike an awe and terrour into the Minds of Men, when they are pursuing the Pleasures of Sin, that *for all these things God will bring them into Judgment.* But notwithstanding these and many other Expressions to the same purpose in Scripture, wherein God hath declared that he will
Acts 7. 31. certainly *Judge the World in Righteous-*
Rom 2. 16. *ness* at the Great Day; that *the Secrets of all hearts shall then be disclosed*; that
2 Cor. 5. 10. *we must all appear before the Judgment-*
Rom. 2. 6. *seat of Christ*; and that *God will render to every Man according to his Deeds*: And notwithstanding it is a thing in it self very reasonable, from the Consideration of God's Justice and Providence, and the Nature and Consequences of good and evil Actions; yet the generality of Mankind go on as secure and careless as if there were no such thing,

or

or that they ought not to be concerned about it. Therefore I ſhall not ſpend time in the Proof of that which I take for granted you all believe, and I am ſure have Reaſon ſo to do; but I ſhall enquire into theſe things which are moſt practical and therefore proper for our Conſideration at this Time.

(1.) How a Matter of ſo great Importance as *a Judgment to come* makes ſo little Impreſſion on the Minds of the generality of Mankind, who profeſs to believe it.

(2.) By what means the Conſideration of a future Judgment may have a greater Influence on all our Minds.

(1.) How a thing of ſo great Importance as *God's bringing us into Judgment* comes to make ſo little Impreſſion on the Minds of the generality of thoſe who profeſs to believe it, when we are ſo tender and ſenſible of ſmall things with reſpect to this World.

For reſolving this, we muſt conſider, that there is a great Difference between the Not-disbelieving Doctrinal Points of Faith, and the practical Improvement of them in our Minds; without which, they remain there but as general and confuſed Notions. Thus too many

many who abhorr being thought Atheists, live as if there were no God; not, that they deny or dispute his Being or Attributes, but they have no Regard to them in the last Dictates of their Minds, or in the Course of their Actions. To go about to prove such things to be true they look on as lost labour, for they do not question them; but there is another thing then which we are to give an Account of, *viz.* how it comes to pass that so great and so weighty Doctrines, being received and allowed to be true, make so little Impression on the Generality of Mankind; especially this of the Day of Judgment; of which these seem to be the main Reasons.

(1.) Men's Impatience of considering great and weighty things at a Distance, which cannot affect and move our Senses.

(2.) The bewitching and stupifying Nature of present and sensual Pleasures; which draw off the Mind from greater things, and weaken all the Impressions they make upon us.

(3.) A General Presumption upon God's Mercy towards Mankind on the Account of the Frailty of humane Nature,

ture, notwithſtanding the ſeverity of his Threatnings in Scripture.

(1.) I begin with *Men's Impatience of Conſidering.*

We flatter and pleaſe our ſelves with the thoughts that we are *Intelligent* and *Conſidering Beings*, when, it may be, *Conſidering* (eſpecially as to Matters of greateſt Conſequence) is one of the things which Mankind have the greateſt Averſion to. For generally, they love to go no farther than the Outſides and Appearances of things, and have their Minds wholly poſſeſſed with falſe and flattering Imaginations, having neither Truth nor Conſiſtency in them. And thoſe who account themſelves of better Breeding than others, are often more impoſed upon than others in this way. The Pomp and Grandeur of the World, the Gaity and Splendour of Living ſtrikes their Fancies with ſuch vehement Impreſſions, that ſcarce any thing elſe gets into their Minds, or ſinks deep into them. There are many other things that ſeem to ſtand fair in their Opinion at ſome times, but it is as they are thought ſerviceable to worldly Greatneſs and Honour.

This, after all the Inſtructions of Philoſophers, the Declamations of Heathen and Chriſtian Orators, and the far more powerfull Arguments of the wiſeſt and beſt of Men, recorded in Holy Scripture, is ſtill the great Idol of Mankind, which they ſerve and worſhip with the trueſt and warmeſt Devotion. All other things, how great and weighty ſoever in themſelves, yet are really look'd on by them as a ſort of Metaphyſical Abſtracted Notions of things inviſible and immaterial, quite out of the reach of their Imagination, which may ſerve for the Amuſement of ſome, and the Affrightment of others, and the Entertainment of Speculative Minds; but, how to raiſe themſelves in the World, to appear Great, and have many Dependents; to purſue and carry on their own Intereſt (tho' without regard to Juſtice and Honeſty) theſe they account Great and Noble things, and fit to employ their Minds upon. But alas! How much are ſuch impoſed upon by meer *Shews* and *Appearances* of things, which are really what God made them, but are not what we fanſie them to be! There are, no doubt, real Conveniencies of Life in Riches,

Riches, and Honour, and Eaſe, and Plenty, or elſe they could never be eſteemed Bleſſings, nor could we have reaſon to thank God for them; but there is a great difference between the Fitneſs of things for our preſent *Uſe*, and for our *Happineſs*; i. e. when we make them our End, and do not employ them in order to a farther End. But it is good Advice of St. *Paul*, *Uſing the World as not abuſing it; for the Fa-* 1 Cor. 7. 31. *ſhion of this World paſſeth away:* it *paſſes* like a Ship under Sail, while the generality of Mankind, like Paſſengers, lie aſleep in it. Sometimes when Storms ariſe, or Waves croſs them, they ſeem to be awake, and to look about them, and to think whither they are going; but thoſe thoughts being uneaſie to them, they lie down again, and are carried they know not whither. But ſtill it is but *the Faſhion of this World*; a meer Landskip, wherein there is great Variety but little Satisfaction, the Shew far out-doing the Subſtance. When the Devil ſhewed Chriſt *the Kingdoms of the* Matth. 4. 8. *World, and the Glory of them*, the higheſt Mountain could afford but a ſmall Proſpect of them, but as ſome think he cauſed a Repreſentation in the Air

of the most tempting Splendour and Glories of them. And this was the truest Representation of them, by glorious Appearances and bewitching Shews. But unless there be something in humane Nature which makes it very apt to be deceived by such things, it were strange the Devil should think to prevail on our Saviour by them. We pity those who travelling in the Night are deceived by *false Fires* and *shining Meteors*, and follow them into Bogs and Precipices; but the case of such is so much worse who are deluded by the deceitfull Vanities of this World to their own Destruction.

And can there be any greater Argument of the want of Consideration, than for Persons to suffer themselves to be so easily and so fatally cheated? It is a wise Observation of *Aristotle*, that *True Knowledge and Wisdom lies most in settling and fixing the Mind.* For it is not the subtlety and fineness of Thoughts, not the quickness and sharpness of Apprehension, nor the close and mathematical Deductions of Reason which make a wise Man, but the having a calm and composed Temper of Mind, the subduing our Passions, and gover-

Τὸ γὰρ ἠρημῶται καὶ στῆναι τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐπίστασθαι καὶ φρονεῖν λεγόμεθα. Nat. Ausc. *l.* 7. *c.* 4. *n.* 15.

governing our Actions with reſpect to our chief End. And in order to this, *Conſideration* is abſolutely neceſſary; without which that which is neareſt to us, and offers it ſelf firſt to our Choice, muſt prevail upon us. And here lies the main Difficulty to perſwade Mankind to chooſe a far greater Happineſs at a Diſtance and inviſible, before a preſent Enjoyment of things we are conſtantly converſant with, and have made an early Impreſſion upon us. But ſtill we ſay, that it is nothing but *Men's Impatience of Conſidering*, which makes them have ſo little Regard to another Life. For if they would but lay both Worlds in the Balance one againſt the other, they would ſoon diſcover the wonderfull Folly of preferring that which this World accounts Happineſs before that which is offered to our Choice in another. For let us make all the fair and reaſonable Allowances that may be, as to our Inclinations, and Appetites, and Circumſtances in this World; as to the Diſtance, Obſcurity, Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Joys of another World; yet every conſidering Man that regards true Happineſs will be ſure to chuſe that which is to come. For,

(1.) Suppoſing the Happineſs were Equal, yet there is no Proportion in the Continuance of them; and a conſidering Man will be ſure to chooſe a Happineſs that can never have an End, before one that may be irrecoverably loſt in a Moment; and can certainly be enjoyed but for a little time, if there were any Certainty at all in the Enjoyment of it.

(2.) The more any have conſidered, the more they have repented placing too much of their Happineſs here, becauſe Reaſon and Experience ſhews them the Folly of it. But the more they have conſidered, the better ſatisfied the Minds of good Men are in placing their Happineſs above; where alone that good is to be found which can make us truly happy, and is to be enjoyed in that Fulneſs, that Purity, that Certainty which makes it fit for the wiſeſt and moſt conſidering Men to preferr above a preſent Happineſs, if it were to be enjoyed on Earth.

(3.) He that looks after a future Happineſs doth not thereby loſe any of the real Conveniencies of humane Life; but he that places his Happineſs here, cannot find it in this World, and is ſure

to

to be miſerable in another: And this makes a very conſiderable Difference in the Choice. Indeed, if God made it abſolutely neceſſary in order to future Happineſs for us to forego all the natural Pleaſures and innocent Delights of this Life, the Terms would be much harder, and hardly poſſible to humane Nature. For, if all Pleaſures of Senſe muſt be renounced, we muſt not ſee the pleaſing Varieties of Nature, nor hear the melodious ſound of Birds, nor taſte the Meat when we are hungry, nor Drink when we are thirſty; for there is really greater Pleaſure of Senſe when Nature craves neceſſary Suſtenance, than what the moſt voluptuous *Epicurean* enjoys in all his Contrivances, firſt to raiſe his Appetite, and then to pleaſe it: For what is moſt natural and neceſſary is the moſt delightfull; every thing of *Force* muſt have ſomething *Uneaſie* in it. But God hath not dealt thus hardly with Mankind; He allows us all the reaſonable Deſires of Nature, and hath only forbid us what is unreaſonable and unneceſſary. And upon the forbearance of what is ſo, joyned with our entire dependence upon himſelf for it, (which the Scrip-

Gal. 5. 6. ture calls *Faith working by Love,*) he hath made the gracious Offer of Eternal Happineſs. It is true, in extraordinary Caſes of Perſecution he requires more, but then he propoſes extraordinary Rewards to make abundant Recompence for them; but in the common and ordinary Caſe of Mankind, he requires no more than our avoiding thoſe Exceſſes in pleaſing our Appetites which Nature and Reaſon condemn. And thoſe who conſider, cannot but ſee how unreaſonable it is to place their Happineſs in forbidden Pleaſures; and to think that nothing can make them happy, but what God hath declared ſhall make them miſerable. It is a ſtrange Croſsneſs in our Deſires, if nothing can pleaſe them but what diſpleaſes God. It were no hard task to ſhew, that God forbids nothing but what is really repugnant to our Well-being here; and how then can any ſuch thing as Happineſs be hoped for in ſuch things? And when a Man ventures being miſerable for ever, for what can never make him happy here, if he had his full Liberty to purſue his Deſires; he ſhews how far he is from acting like a wiſe, rational, conſidering Being. So that

Impa-

Impatience of conſidering is one great Reaſon why the thoughts of a Judgment to come make ſo little Impreſſion on Men's minds.

(2.) The ſecond Reaſon is *the Bewitching and Stupifying Nature of ſenſual Pleaſures*. The *Epicurean* Philoſophers, who managed the *Theory* of Pleaſure with the greateſt Art, ſo as it might look like a proper happineſs for Mankind, found two things abſolutely neceſſary in order to it.

(1.) The Retrenching all inordinate Deſires, *viz.* ſuch as had more Pain following them, than there was Pleaſure in the Enjoyment of them.

(2.) The removing the Fears of another World out of Men's minds. For as long as theſe ſunk into their Minds, they muſt rob them of that inward Tranquillity, without which it were a vain thing ſo much as to talk of Happineſs. But it was impoſſible, upon their Grounds, to do either of theſe. For,

(1.) It is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that the Happineſs of our preſent Life ſhould conſiſt in the Enjoyment of Pleaſure, and yet the Pleaſure of Opinion to be taken away, ſince the *Pleaſure* of *Opinion*

Opinion is the far greateſt Part of the *Pleaſure* of Life; and that which is as much valued and eſteemed by all thoſe who place their Happineſs in Pleaſure. If it were all to be reduced to that which lies in ſatisfying the neceſſary Deſires of Nature, then ſuch as have juſt enough for that, are far more happy than the Rich and Voluptuous, becauſe they have leſs Pains and Care. But if any allowance be made to the *Pleaſure* of *Fancy* and *Opinion*, then no ſtop can be given to inordinate Deſires. For, who can ſet bounds to Fancy, or lay a reaſonable Reſtraint upon Deſires, if the Differences of Good and Evil be taken away? As they muſt be, if meer Pleaſure and Pain be to be regarded in our Actions.

(2.) As to the other, the Methods they uſed to remove all Fears of another World were weak and trifling, and they had no Advantage in Point of *Argument*, but what the Ignorance and Folly of the Idolatrous Part of Mankind at that time gave them. But there is a far greater Advantage in Point of *Intereſt*, which makes Men of ſenſual Lives very willing to be rid of the Fears of another Life. And a willing

Mind

Mind goes a great way in believing or not believing. Thoſe who place their Happineſs in eating and drinking well (as they call it) and other ſenſual Delights, which can never be enjoyed when this Life is ended, have but a melancholy Proſpect into another World; for they are ſhut out from the very Poſſibility of being happy in their own Senſe, (unleſs they would believe the Eaſtern Impoſtour;) but when they once come to apprehend that there is no Pleaſure to make them happy but what is ſeated in the Body, they are apt to conclude that when that dies, there is an end of all, for their Imaginations can reach no farther. And the true Reaſon is, they have laid Reaſon and Conſcience aſleep ſo long, that it is very hard to awaken them; their Notions of Good and Evil are like the confuſed Apprehenſions of Men half awake; they ſee enough to perplex but not enough to ſatisfie them. And when their Fears grow upon them, they have not the Heart and Courage to examine them, whether they be reaſonable or not; but rather chooſe to return to their former *Opiates*, than undergo the trouble of an effectual

effectual Cure by a hearty Repentance
Luk.15.17. and *coming to themselves*, as the prodigal Son in the Parable did, when his Hardship had brought him to Consideration. We do not know what had become of him, if he had been wise and frugal in his Pleasures; if he had taken care of a good Stock and a plentifull Subsistence; but he first came to be pinched with want, before he was awakened to repent. But we have in Scripture a more remarkable Instance of the stupifying Nature of sensual Pleasures; and that was in *David* after his Sins of Adultery and Murther. It is a wonder, how a Man of such a tender Conscience in other things, should continue so long under the Guilt of these Enormities, without being awakened to Repentance: Did he not know these to be great Sins? And did not his Conscience charge him with the Guilt of them? How came he then to need a Prophet to be sent to him, and to deal so plainly with him, as to tell him *Thou*
2Sam.12.7. *art the Man?* But this is a plain Evidence, how much the Pleasures of Sin are apt to stupifie Men's Consciences so far, that unless God by his Grace be pleased to awaken them thoroughly,

they

they never come to a ſincere and hearty Repentance. *David* ſaw nothing more as to the Guilt of his Sins, when he penn'd his 51ſt *Pſalm*, than his own Reaſon and Natural Conſcience might inform him before; but he had quite another Senſe of his Sins then; his *Heart was broken* and his Soul *wounded* under the Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure; and this makes him pray ſo earneſtly and ſo importunately to God for the Pardon of his Sins. And if it were thus in the caſe of a Man otherwiſe *after God's own heart*, i. e. afraid of offending him, and carefull to pleaſe him; what may we imagine it to be in thoſe who in the time of Youth *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes:* i. e. allowing themſelves in all ſenſual Inclinations, and purſuing carnal Delights ſo far till they have loſt all Senſe of God and another World; and ſuch as theſe, nothing but the powerfull Influences of Divine Grace can awaken and recover.

(3.) The third Reaſon is, *A General Preſumption upon God's Mercy.* The firſt thing which Sinners, in the Heat of their Youth, and Purſuit of their Luſts, aim at, is to think as little as may

may be of what they are doing, or what will be the Conſequence of their Actions. For every thought of themſelves is very uneaſie to them, and every thought of God is much more ſo; therefore they drive away all ſuch Thoughts by one Means or other, by Sleep, Diverſion, Company, and ſuch publick Entertainments, as rather heighten and inflame their Vices than correct them.

If all this will not do, but there will be ſome melancholy Hours, wherein Conſcience begins to rouze it ſelf, and to awaken the Sinner to ſome Senſe of his Folly; then he is ready to hearken with Pleaſure to any Raileries againſt *Religion and Morality*; and admires the Wit of any one who dares ſay a bold and ſharp thing againſt the Wiſdom of all Ages, and of the beſt Men in them. And one or two ſuch Sayings, without Proof, are cried up as far beyond the beſt Rules of Morality, or the Evidence of natural and revealed Religion. Any Sceptical Diſputes are ſufficient Demonſtrations to them; and the moſt unreaſonable Cavils againſt Religion are embraced, becauſe againſt the thing they hate; and even a Jeſt againſt the

Day

Day of Judgment ſhall ſignifie more with them, than the ſtrongeſt Arguments in the World to prove it. The true Reaſon is, they love their Vices, and hate every thing which makes them uneaſie to them; and nothing doth more ſo, than the thoughts of a Judgment to come.

But ſuppoſe after all, the terrible and frequent Expreſſions of Scripture concerning the Day of Judgment, joyned with the Reaſonableneſs of the thing, do make ſuch Impreſſion on their Minds that they cannot wholly ſhake off the Fears and Apprehenſions of it, then their laſt Endeavour is to mitigate and leſſen them, from a *General Preſumption of God's Mercifull Nature*; and therefore they are willing to ſuppoſe, that however God, to keep the World in awe, hath threatned them with the dreadfull Severities of the Great Day, yet as a tender Father who threatens his diſobedient Son, in order to reclaim him, with no leſs than diſinheriting him for ever; yet when it comes to Execution he may relent, not from his Son's Deſerts, but his own Compaſſion; ſo they hope, or believe, (or are willing to do ſo) that God at the Great Day

Day will not proceed according to the Rigour which he hath threatned to uſe. And to comfort themſelves in theſe hopes they find out all poſſible Extenuations of their Sins: "If we, ſay they, "had been created purely intellectual "Beings, free from this load of Fleſh, "and the Inclinations which are natu-"ral to it, then it had been more rea-"ſonable to have called us to a ſtrict Ac-"count for every Action of our Lives; "for then every Inclination to Evil "muſt have come from our Minds; "but now our Bodies corrupt and "draw them aſide; and the Inclinati-"ons to Evil grow faſter than our "Reaſon, which ſhould check and re-"ſtrain them. And when thoſe Incli-"nations are ſtrongeſt, Men have not "that Judgment which is neceſſary to "the Government of unruly Paſſions. "So that the very Frame of humane "Nature ſeems to plead for Sins com-"mitted in the Heat and Violence of "Youth. Beſides, ſuch is the Strict-"neſs and Purity of the Law of God, "and ſo great the Weakneſs and Diſa-"bility, the Ignorance and Inadver-"tency of Mankind, that if God will "make no Allowance for humane

Frail-

" Frailty, who can ſtand before his " Tribunal? And, if any Allowance " be made for Sins of Infirmity, there " are ſo many Abatements to be " made for Sins committed through " ſudden Paſſion, through Miſtake, " through the unavoidable Impotency " of humane Nature in this degenerate " Condition, that the Severity of that " Day is not much to be feared.

This is the utmoſt of the Sinner's Plea againſt the Severity of the Day of Judgment: But, to ſhew how faulty it is, I ſhall offer theſe Conſiderations;

1. That God will certainly *Judge the World in Righteouſneſs*; and therefore none ſhall have Cauſe to complain of the Harſhneſs or Severity of his Proceedings. For, this *Righteouſneſs* is not the Rigour of Juſtice, but that Equity which hath a Regard to the Circumſtances of Actions, and the Abatement and Extenuation of Faults which ariſe from them. Act. 17. 31.

2. None ſhall ſuffer at that Day, but for their wilfull Impenitency, and obſtinate Continuance in Sin. For, this is not only agreeable to the Mercifull Nature of God, to forgive repenting Sinners; but it is one of the great De-

ſigns of the Goſpel to aſſure Mankind of it by the higheſt Teſtimonies, even by the Death and Reſurrection of the Son of God, and all the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it, and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

3. There are ſeveral Degrees of Wilfulneſs and Obſtinacy, and Men's Judgments ſhall be according to them. Some Men's Capacities, Opportunities and Helps have very much exceeded others; ſome have broken through ſtronger Convictions and more powerfull Aſſiſtances of Grace than others; ſome have had more early Inſtructions, more frequent Warnings, more obliging Favours from Heaven than others. And as it is reaſonable that Perſons ſuffer for their obſtinate Continuance in Sin, ſo that they ſhould ſuffer according to the Degrees and Circumſtances of it.

(4.) It is no unjuſt Severity in God, to deprive Men of that Happineſs which they have wilfully refuſed; and to condemn them to that Miſery which their Sins have deſerved. Hath not God made the moſt condeſcending Offer of Mercy and Salvation, that it is poſſible for Creatures to expect from him, after

ter ſo many and great Provocations? Could Heaven ſtoop lower than it hath done to vile and ungratefull Sinners? When the Son of God came down from Heaven on purpoſe to reconcile God and Man together: When the Spirit of God warns and excites their Minds to the Conſideration of their Eternal Welfare: When *the Meſſengers of this Reconciliation are to woo and intreat and beſeech Sinners in Chriſt's ſtead, as tho' God did beſeech them by them, that they would be reconciled to God*; When the *Patience and Goodneſs and Long-ſuffering of God* is exerciſed ſo much on purpoſe *to lead them to Repentance*; When God inſtead of perfect Obedience, is willing to pardon and paſs by ſo many Offences, if they truly repent of them, and to receive them ſtill into his Favour and Mercy; When after all this Men do rather preferr the preſent Pleaſures of Sin, before all that Happineſs which God ſo freely offers, is it any Injuſtice in him to ſuffer them for ever to be deprived of that which they ſo wilfully, ſo ungratefully, ſo obſtinately refuſed? And ſuppoſing the Souls of Men to ſubſiſt in another World free from all thoſe Clouds of Errour and Miſtake, and the

falſe Notions they are deceived by here, as well as all the Diverſions and Pleaſures of this Life, it is not to be imagined, but they muſt for ever ſuffer an intolerable Anguiſh within (called, *A* Mar. 9.44. *Worm that never dies, and a Fire that never goes out,*) from the Reflections upon their own Folly. What Vengeance beyond this God may inflict, we now know not, (may none of us ever know it!) but we are ſure it will never exceed the Proportion and Deſert of their Sins. Which is ſufficient to clear the Juſtice of God in his Proceedings with Mankind in the Day of Judgment.

2. It remains now only to ſhew by what means God's bringing us to Judgment may make a deeper Impreſſion upon our Minds; By conſidering theſe two things:

1. That our not conſidering it will not make our Condition better, but much worſe.

2. That our Conſidering it is the beſt means to prevent the evil Conſequences of it.

(1.) Our not conſidering it will not make our Condition better. There were great Reaſon indeed *to walk in the*

way

way of our hearts, and in the ſight of our eyes, and never trouble our ſelves with what will happen at the great Day, if the putting it out of our Heads would make our Accounts the eaſier when it comes. But alas! Whether we think of it or no, the Account runs on, and we muſt anſwer to every particular at laſt; and how unprovided ſhall we be, if we ſpend no time here in examining, ſtating and clearing of them as far as we are able. It is a mighty Privilege we have by the Goſpel, that God allows us to clear our Accounts with him in this World; *For, if we would judge* 1 Cor. 11. *our ſelves we ſhall not be judged*. i.e. If 31. we call our ſelves to a ſtrict Account for our Actions; if we repent heartily and ſincerely of our Sins; if we ſeek earneſtly to God for Mercy; if we have *our Conſciences cleanſed by the Blood of Chriſt* from the Pollution of our Sins; then we may with Joy and Peace in our Minds think of the Great Day of Recompence. But if we never enter into our ſelves, to ſearch and examine our own Actions, never look into the Habits of our own Minds, nor charge our ſelves with the Guilt of the Sins we have committed, how can we ever hope

to escape the Scrutiny or avoid the Severity of that Day? For our Account continually increases by our Neglect of it, and the Burthen of God's Wrath must be so much heavier when we have taken no care to lessen it, but *after our* Rom. 2. 5. *hardness and impenitent hearts have only treasured up wrath against the day of wrath.*

(2.) Our considering that God will bring us to Judgment is the best means to prevent the evil Consequences of it. For, although we cannot hope to plead Innocency; yet, (which is next in Point of Wisdom) this is the most effectual Motive to bring us to Repentance: And that which makes us repent makes us to grow wise in time, and to lay *a good Foundation for Eternal Life.* There are many Arguments to induce us to it in the Folly and Shame of our Sins; the Wisdom of Reflection and Reformation; the Instances of it and Exhortations to it recorded in Scripture; but there is none more sensible and which touches Men more in Point of Interest and Concernment than this of *a Judgment to come.* "Must I then, "saith a penitent Sinner, give a strict "Account to God of all the evil Acti-

"ons

" ons of my Life, and ſuffer according
" to the Deſert of them if I die in Im-
" penitency? How much doth it then
" concern me to repent betimes, to
" repent in good earneſt, to repent
" while there is hopes of Mercy! A-
" way then all ye deceitfull Vanities of
" this wicked World, ye have too long
" deceived and ſeduced me: What will
" all this vain ſhew, this buſie Sedu-
" cer, this impertinent Outſide of the
" World ſignifie, when I muſt be ſtript
" of all, and ſtand guilty and accuſed
" by my own Conſcience before the
" Judgment-Seat of Chriſt? Oh! how
" wretched ſhall I be, if my Conſci-
" ence condemns me before the Sen-
" tence of the Judge! Therefore, I am
" reſolved to prevent the Judgment of
" that Day; I will accuſe, judge, and
" condemn my ſelf; nay, I will pro-
" ceed to Execution, as to all the vi-
" tious Habits and corrupt Inclinations
" within me. And although I cannot
" wholly *mortifie* them, yet I will *cru-*
" *cifie* them; *i. e.* nail them to the
" Croſs, and allow them no longer Li-
" berty; and albeit they may ſtruggle
" for a time, yet I will never give way
" to their Dominion over me any

" more; that ſo Death and Judgment
" may find me prepared, if not with
" unſpotted Innocency, yet with hear-
" ty and ſincere Repentance.

To conclude all; let the Conſideration of this Day of *Judgment to come* enter deep into our Minds, and awaken us out of our Lethargy and Security. We are very apt to put off unpleaſing things from time to time, and to paſs away our time here as eaſily as may be. But this is no part of Wiſdom, and we ſhall extremely blame our ſelves for it one time or other. The beſt we can do now, is to recover what is paſt by Repentance, and to ſet our ſelves to the making up our Accounts with God in this World: For, we are all walking on the brink of Eternity, and know not how ſoon we may drop into it. But what Eternal Horrour and Confuſion muſt follow us, if we go on to ſlight the Opportunities he ſtill affords us of making our Peace with him who is to be our Judge? May God therefore of his Mercy awaken us all to a timely and ſerious Repentance, and then *our Iniquities ſhall not be our Ruine.*

SER-

SERMON V.

Preached at

The Aſſizes

AT

WORCESTER,

Sept. *the* 21ſt, 1690.

2 Timothy I. 7.

For God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, and of Love and of a ſound Mind.

IF we look into the Scope and Deſign of this Epiſtle, we ſhall find St. *Paul* at the time of writing it, under more than ordinary Apprehenſions of

of the ſad Condition of the Chriſtian Church.

As to *Himſelf*, he had great Satisfaction in the particular Care of Divine
2 Tim 3. 11. Providence towards Him: For, *God* had not only formerly delivered him out of many Perſecutions; but had
Ch. 4. 17. lately reſcued him *out of the Mouth of the Lion*, i. e. from a great and imminent Danger. And though he foreſaw,
Ch. 4. 6. that *the time of his Departure was at hand*; yet that was ſo far from giving him any Trouble, that he had the Comfort of a good Conſcience in looking
Verſ. 7. back; *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith*;
Verſ. 8. and in looking forward, *Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the Righteous Judge ſhall give me at that Day.*

But all his Diſſatisfaction did ariſe from looking about him; *For without were Fightings, and within were Fears.* The Perſecutions abroad were indeed ſo ſharp and ſevere, that none could keep a good Conſcience without a ſhare in them; which makes him ſay, *Yea,*
Verſ. 12. *and all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer Perſecutions.* But this was not that which troubled him moſt;

for

ſor there were two things which ſeem to have made a deep and ſad Impreſſion upon his Mind.

(1.) He obſerved a great Coldneſs and Indifferency among ſome who pretended a mighty Zeal for the common Intereſt of their Religion before. Of this he gives a ſtrange Inſtance in his own Caſe. *At my firſt Anſwer*, ſaith he, *no man ſtood with me, but all men forſook me; I pray God it be not laid to their Charge.* They might think it Prudence and Caution at ſuch a dangerous time, but the Apoſtle certainly thought it a fault, or elſe he would never have pray'd *that it might not be laid to their Charge.* Something might be ſaid in Excuſe of thoſe who were ſo near danger; but what can be ſaid for the general Coldneſs of thoſe at a Diſtance? *This thou knoweſt, that all they which are in* Aſia *be turned away from me.* A ſad Conſideration to *Timothy*, who was entruſted by him with the particular Care of thoſe in *Aſia!* For, what Comfort could he hope for among them, who were turned away from St. *Paul?* Such a Defection as this muſt needs bring great diſhonour to Religion, as well as diſſatisfaction to him.

Ch. 4. 16.

Ch. 1. 15.

(2.) He

(2.) He obſerved a buſie ſort of Seducers, who were crept in among them; who were crafty, reſtleſs and deſigning Men; ſuch as could not compaſs their own ends without taking upon them a Pretence of Zeal for Religion. They were Men of as ill Tempers as we can well imagine Men to be; *They were lo-*
Ch. 3. 1, *vers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters,*
2, 3, 4 *proud*, &c. But he concludes their Character with what one would have leaſt expected from ſuch a ſort of Men, *that*
Verſ. 5. *they had a Form of Godlineſs.* They were ſuch *painted Sepulchres* that made a more than ordinary Shew and Appearance, but within there was nothing but Rottenneſs and Corruption. Men who pretended to Religion without Vertue; and hoped to be accounted *Godly* without any real Goodneſs. They made a great Shew of Zeal about ſome things, and were induſtrious in gaining Proſelytes; for which end *they crept into Houſes*, &c. but whatever they pretended, their own Intereſt lay at bottom;
1 Tim. 6. 5. *Suppoſing that gain is Godlineſs*; and they were ſo far from any hopes of Amendment, that St. *Paul* gives that dreadfull
2 Tim. 3. Character of them, *that they waxed*
13. *worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived.*

And

And what now ſhould *Timothy* do under ſuch a Complication of ill Circumſtances? Should he only ſtand ſtill and ſee which way things would go? Or ſhould he give way to Deſpondency and ſink under the Burthen of his Fears? No, St. *Paul*, altho' at a Diſtance, and a *Priſoner*, yet thinks fit to rouze, to animate, to incourage him; and not only *to put him in Mind of the Gift of God which was in him*; but of that Spirit and Temper, which true *Chriſtianity* poſſeſſes Men's minds with. 2 Tim. 1. 6.

For God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, of Love and of a ſound Mind.

Which words may be conſidered two Ways:

I. With reſpect to *Difficulties* and *Troubles* in the World; and ſo it is not *a Spirit of Fear, but of Power.* Some render it *Spiritum Timiditatis*, a timorous, puſillanimous Spirit; which is apt to be dejected with Fears, ſo as not to have Courage and Reſolution enough to do ones Duty for fear of Danger; and *a Spirit of Power* is that which ſupports and bears up the Mind under a Proſpect of Difficulties, ſo as not to be hin-

hinder'd thereby from that Duty which lies upon us.

II. With respect to the *Humours* and *Passions* of Men; and so it is *a Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind:* Not a peevish, froward, exasperating, provoking Spirit, but *a Spirit of Love*; Not a turbulent, seditious, unruly Spirit, but *of a sound Mind.*

I. With respect to *Difficulties* and *Troubles.* Which may be understood two Ways:

1. As it may relate to such as St. *Paul* and *Timothy*; *We have not received*, i. e. we that have an *Apostolical Spirit* given to us.

2. As it may relate to all Christians; We that own Christ sincerely and truly *have not received*, &c.

(1.) I shall consider the Words with respect to the *Apostolical Spirit*; because this day we commemorate one of them, (St. *Matthew.*)

Those who had the *Apostolical Office* committed to them, (whether *Primarily* by *Christ* himself, or *Secondarily* by the *Apostles*, as *Timothy* and *Titus* and others) had great need of this *Apostolical Spirit.* For, really, the Difficulties

ties were ſo great, which they were to go through, that no ordinary Meaſures of Courage and Reſolution would ſerve them. When men fight with Enemies in the open Field, there is a Multitude combined together; among whom there is abundance of Noiſe and Heat and Examples; and the Hopes of preſent Victory, and the Shame and Danger of running away; which animate Perſons in a Day of Battel: But it is another kind of Courage which is required to make Men bear up againſt the Malice and Subtilty of the Devil and of wicked Men; for here the Combination is to all appearance much ſtronger on the worſe Side; and if we are to judge of Succeſs by Numbers, thoſe who promote Vertue and Goodneſs could never bear up againſt their Adverſaries; who were ſure to carry it by the *Poll*.

There were among the *Heathens* ſome few great Men, who endeavour'd to reform the Vices of Mankind: But, alas! What poor Succeſs had they in their Attempts this way? Although they wanted neither Wit, nor Learning, nor Addreſs to carry on this Noble Deſign; ſuch as *Socrates* at *Athens* and *Epictetus*

picletus at *Rome*, and ſome others, who lived agreeably to their Doctrine; yet how little Effect had both their Precepts and Example on the reſt of the People either at *Athens* or *Rome*? *Socrates* declared a mighty Reſolution *rather to die than to ſay or do any thing unbecoming the Station God placed him in*; and upon the Proſecution of two malicious Men, the prevailing Party were reſolved to try the Experiment, and took him at his Word. After which, his Diſciples durſt not deal ſo plainly and openly as he had done; and the Artifice they were put to, loſt the force of the beſt Part of their *Philoſophy*; which they ſo mixed with Numbers and Figures and abſtracted Speculations, that it became a *Myſtery*, inſtead of a plain Deſign to reform the Manners of Men. The beſt and wiſeſt of them ſeem to have taken more pains to ſatisfie themſelves, than to have inſtructed others; or if they did, they were ſome few choſen Diſciples, whom they initiated with as much Care, as they were wont to do in their ſolemn Myſteries.

But the Apoſtles undertook to reform the World, as to two things, which Man;

Mankind are the hardeſt brought off from, and thoſe are *Idolatry* and *Vice*. And they went plainly and roundly to work, which Men can the leaſt bear; as we ſee by the Perſecutions they underwent almoſt in every Place aſſoon as their Deſign was underſtood. There was a general Clamour againſt them as the Diſturbers of Mankind, as *thoſe who turned the World upſide down*; which in ſome ſenſe was true, but not as they meant it with reſpect to Order and Government. But when Men have no mind to be reformed, they muſt have ſome Terms of Reproach to faſten upon thoſe who go about to do it. It being natural for them to put *Pictures* of *Devils* on thoſe, whom they have a mind to execute. And when they endeavour'd to convince them of their Immoralities, they were very impatient; of which we have a clear Inſtance in St. *Paul*'s Preaching to *Felix concerning Righteouſneſs and Temperance and Judgment to come:* which were excellent Subjects, but they went too near him; he was too much concerned, to be willing to hear any more of them. The Diſcourſe of St. *Paul* had too much Force in it for him to bear it any lon-

Acts 17. 6.

Act. 24. 25.

ger; for it cauſed ſuch a diſorder in his Mind as affected his Body, for, *Felix trembled:* And then he thought it beſt to diſmiſs him to *a more convenient Seaſon*, which never came, that we read of. Which ſhews, how much more willing Men are to continue in their Faults, than to hear them reproved in order to Amendment. *Am I therefore become your Enemy*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *becauſe I tell you the Truth?* No doubt of it: For, no Truths can be ſo uneaſie and provoking as thoſe which gaul the Conſciences of Men.

Gal. 4. 16.

The falſe Teachers whom St. *Paul* complains ſo much of, were ſenſible of the Inconveniencies which follow'd plain Truth; and therefore, to avoid Perſecution, they ſo mixed and adulterated the Doctrine of the true Apoſtles, that it loſt its main Force and Efficacy. And although by their ſhifts and compliances with *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they eſcaped the hard Uſage which others underwent; yet the Effect of it was, that their Doctrine took no deep rooting in the World: For, in *Origen's* time, a very inconſiderable Number of their Diſciples were left. But though the plain Simplicity of the Goſpel met with Per-

Perſecutions on all hands; yet by the undaunted Courage of the Preachers of it, the more it was oppoſed, the more it prevailed; and at laſt triumphed over its greateſt Perſecutors.

(2.) Theſe words may be underſtood with reſpect to all Chriſtians; and ſo they ſhew what the Temper and Spirit of Chriſtianity is, where it hath its due and proper Effect upon men's minds.

The *Moraliſts* ſpeak much of an excellent Vertue, which they call *Magnanimity*: which implies ſuch a Greatneſs of Mind, that it carries a Man on in doing what becomes him, without being diſcouraged by the Fears of what may befall him in it.

And this our Saviour doth ſuppoſe to be ſo attainable by all his Diſciples, that he requires it from them. *Fear not them which can kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul*; or *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do*, i. e. Govern your Fears by the Conſideration of another World and not of this. But is this poſſible, to be rid of our Fears as to this World? It may be ſome *Heroical* minds may attain to this; or thoſe on whom God beſtows the extra-

Matth. 10. 28. Luk. 12. 5.

ordinary Gifts of his Spirit: But can any by the common Measures and Assistances of Grace reach to it? Fear is a natural and violent Passion; which is not easily dissembled, much less cured; and the weaker any are, as to Mind or Body, the more they are subject to the Power of it. There are some Constitutions by Reason of their dark and confused and melancholy Apprehensions of things, can never get out of the Labyrinth of their own Fears. And where Suspicions and Jealousies find an easie Entertainment, it is not possible to cure such Person's Fears; for they are afraid of all possible things. Such I must exclude as labouring under a Disease of Imagination; as we do those who are under a Fever; And for whose *Unreasonable Fears* I know no better Cure than there is of Madness, which is to bring the Persons to the Use of *Reason* as well as we can; and if Reason doth not cure them, nothing else will.

But let us suppose the Fears reasonable, *i. e.* such as considering the State of the World a prudent Man may justly apprehend; is it not possible to master these Fears? Not to cure our Apprehension when it is reasonable, but to take Care,

Care, that it do not torment and diſquiet our Mind; but eſpecially that it do not hinder us from doing our Duty.

And this is that Spirit of *Chriſtian Magnanimity* which I deſign to ſpeak of; and to make the Matter as clear as I can; I ſhall,

(1.) Enquire into thoſe things which the *Nature* of *Magnanimity* requires in general.

(2.) Shew the particular Meaſures of it according to *Chriſtianity*.

(3.) Conſider the *Poſſibility* of attaining of it, and the Means in order to it.

(1.) As to *Magnanimity* in general; It is not ſo much any one Vertue, as a Reſult from ſeveral put together; and eſpecially theſe,

(1.) Integrity of Mind: Which implies theſe things.

1. A Freedom from any mean and ſiniſter Ends in what we do. *Ariſtotle*, who conſidered the Nature of Moral Vertues, as well as any Man, ſaith, there can be no Magnanimity without *Simplicity* and *Truth*. And *Cicero* ſaith, *Men of Courage and*

Ἀκολουθῇ γὰρ τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ Ἁπλότης καὶ Ἀλήθεια. *Ariſt.* de Virt. & Vitiis.

Itaq; Viros fortes, magnanimos, eoſdémque bonos & ſimplices, veritatis amicos, miniméque fallaces eſſe volumus. *Of.* l. 1.

Magnanimity, are Men of Simplicity and Truth, and not given to Tricks. It is the Senſe of its own Weakneſs which diſpoſes any living Creature to craft and cunning: The Lion knows his own ſtrength and deſpiſes it; the Fox is ſenſible he hath not ſtrength enough for his own Security, and therefore tries all other ways to compaſs his End. A Spirit of Magnanimity is above all little Arts and Shifts, which tend only to ſome mean and pitifull End, not worthy to be regarded. Men of Artifice and Deſign may think it Weakneſs and Folly; but it is really a Greatneſs of Mind which makes a good and wiſe Man deſpiſe ſuch things as unbecoming that true Greatneſs which lies in a generous Integrity: which cunning Men can no more reach to, even when they affect it, than an Actor upon a Stage can the true Greatneſs of a Prince.

2. Sincere and unaffected Goodneſs. Which is that, which *Ariſtotle* calls Καλοκαγαθία, and makes abſolutely neceſſary to *Magnanimity*. The firſt thing in the Character of a good Man among the *Moraliſts* is, that he be inwardly ſo; not taking upon him the Appearance and Shew of Vertue for the ſake of

Nicom. l. 4. c. 3.

of others; but forming his Mind and Temper according to the Principles and Rules of it. And when he hath done this, the whole Courſe of his Actions will be agreeable thereto: he will not only be juſt and temperate, but kind and obliging, ready to do good to all, according to his Circumſtances; and behaving himſelf under all, as becomes a good Man.

(2.) There muſt not only be *Integrity*, but *Courage* and *Reſolution*; without which, in difficult times, it is impoſſible to maintain Integrity. I do not by this mean any ſudden and violent Heats, which rather ſhew the greatneſs of the Paſſions than of the Mind; but a calm and ſedate Courage, which exceeds the other, as a Man of true Valour doth one that is raſh and foolhardy. The latter may do bolder things than the other; but none of the *Moraliſts* allow it to be *true Fortitude*; for that muſt be guided by Reaſon and Diſcretion. The bold and daring Man never conſiders what he doth; but he is carried on by a ſudden and violent *Impetus*, or ſuch an agitation of Spirits, that ſuffer him not to think; but on he goes, and if he meets with Success,

ceſs, it is more owing to his Paſſion and Heat, than to his Wiſdom or Courage. Violent and furious Heats (although under a Pretence of Zeal for Religion) are like the furious On-ſets of undiſciplined Soldiers, which do more miſchief by their want of Order, than they do good by unſeaſonable Courage. True Courage muſt be a Regular thing; it muſt have not only a good End, but a wiſe Choice of Means; and then the Courage lies in the vigorous Purſuit of it: not being diſheartned by difficulties, nor giving over through deſpondency and diſappointments.

(3.) There muſt be an Indifferency of Mind, as to the Event of doing our Duty. Not a perfect Indifferency, which humane Nature is hardly capable of; but ſuch as keeps a Man's mind firm and conſtant ſo as not to be moved from the Dictates of a well-ſatisfied Conſcience by the Motives of this World. It was a remarkable Saying of *Socrates*, which *Antoninus* takes notice of, *That man*, ſaith he, *is of no value, who regards any thing ſo much as doing his Duty. It is not whether a Man lives or dies, but whether what he doth be juſt*

Antonin. l. 7. §. 44

or

or unjuſt, whether it becomes a good Man to do it, or not, which he is to look after.

If thou canſt not find any thing in life, l. 3. §. 3. ſaith that excellent Emperour himſelf, *better than Juſtice and Truth, a ſound Mind* (Σωφροσύνη the word here uſed) *and a diſcreet Courage; then make this thy great buſineſs and apply thy ſelf to it with all thy heart. Let neither popular Applauſe, nor Power, nor Riches, nor ſenſual Pleaſure draw thee off from it. Chooſe that which is beſt and purſue it,* ἁπλῶς καὶ ἐλευθερίως *with ſimplicity of Mind and the free Inclination of thy Will.*

But the Roman Orator goes beyond them, when he ſaith, *That Nothing argues ſo mean and narrow a Mind, as the Love of Riches; nothing ſavours more of a great Mind, than to contemn them; and if Men enjoy them to beſtow them in Beneficence and Liberality.* And again, *of.* l. 1.

To value Juſtice and Honeſty and Kindneſs and Liberality above Pleaſure and Riches and Life it ſelf, and the common good above ones private Intereſt, argues a truly great Mind, and is moſt agreeable to humane Nature. l. 3.

Theſe

These things I have mention'd, not only to clear the Nature of *Magnanimity*; but to shew what generous Notions these Heathens had concerning the Practise of Vertue and Integrity, even when it was accompanied with Losses and Hardships for the sake of it; and what a mean Esteem they had in Comparison of that *great Idol*, which the World still worships, *i. e.* Riches.

(2.) I now come to shew the true Measures of *Magnanimity* according to the Christian Doctrine. And that consists in two things:

1. In studying to please God above all things.

2. In choosing rather to suffer than displease him.

1. In studying to please God above all things. *Aristotle* hath observed that *Magnanimity hath a particular Respect to Honour*: The Question then is, whether it relates to what gets Esteem and Honour among Men; or, to that Honour which comes from God. It's true, the Heathen Moralists knew very little of this; although *Aristotle* once mentions *the Kindness which God hath for Persons of the most excellent and vertuous Minds, as being neareſt of Kindred*

Mor. l. 4. c. 3.

l. 10.

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to the Gods. But this was not ſettled as a Principle among them; but it is the Foundation of all true Religion with us, that our main Care ought to be to pleaſe God, and to value other things as they are moſt pleaſing to him. The moſt refined Atheiſts of this Age confeſs, that the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apoſtles is very Pious and Vertuous; although they look on them as deceived in their Imaginations. We take what they grant, *viz.* that the *Morals* of Chriſtianity are very good; but we ſay, that it is a heightning and improving of Moral Vertues to make them Divine Graces; and not to practiſe them meerly as agreeable to Reaſon, but as pleaſing to God. Thoſe who allow a God, who is wiſe and powerfull, do confeſs, that no Sacrifices are ſo pleaſing to him, as a Pious, devout and vertuous Mind: but then they were to ſeek, as to the Meaſures of Piety and Vertue. But that is the Infinite Advantage by the Scriptures, which we enjoy, that by them we know what is moſt pleaſing to God. *He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what hath the Lord required of thee; but to do juſtly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly* Mic. 6. 8.

humbly with thy God. When God ſheweth us our Duty, we have no longer any ground to diſpute it; eſpecially, when it is ſo agreeable to the Divine Nature, and our own. What can we do better with reſpect to Mankind, than *to do juſtly and to love Mercy?* What can become us more with reſpect to God, than *to walk humbly with our God? To walk with God*, is to have a conſtant Regard to him in the Courſe of our Lives; thus *Enoch walked with God*, and *Noah* and *Abraham:* and *to walk humbly with him*, is to maintain a due Senſe of our Diſtance from him and our Dependence upon him. And this *Humility of Mind* doth not take off from true *Magnanimity*; for, it is the *Magnanimity* of Chriſtians that I am ſpeaking of. The *Magnanimity* of *Philoſophers* carried them beyond the due bounds of their Dependence upon God; for they preſumed upon their own Sufficiency, both as to the Support of their Minds under Difficulties and the making themſelves happy. In both which they were lamentably miſtaken. But the Humility of Chriſtians in depending upon God for Aſſiſtance and Happineſs is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with *Magnanimity*,

nanimity, that it is not to be had without it. *For*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *I can do all things.* Can any thing be ſaid greater than that? But how? *Through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me.* And this Dependence upon God for his Grace is no more inconſiſtent with Magnanimity, than a Favourite's Greatneſs is with his Duty and Service to his Prince. The Chriſtian's Magnanimity lies in having but one to pleaſe; but ſuch a one, as is the greateſt, the wiſeſt, the happieſt Being in the World. Phil. 4.13.

2. But if he cannot pleaſe God and the World together, then this Magnanimity carries him rather to chooſe ſuffering under the World's Diſpleaſure, than to diſpleaſe God. This ſeems a hard Choice; but there would be no *Magnanimity* without Difficulty. It may pleaſe God, that our Duty and Intereſt may lie together, and then it is Folly and Humour to chooſe to ſuffer when we need not. Where there is true *Magnanimity* in ſuffering, there is an impartial and prudent weighing and balancing all Circumſtances together, before there can be a juſt Reſolution of ſuffering. And a Man's Courage in ſuffering depends very much upon the Motives induced

induced him to it; which every Man's Conſcience muſt judge of.

But there are two ſorts of ſufferings *Magnanimity* may ſhew it ſelf in:

(1.) The Neceſſary and unavoidable Accidents and Calamities of Life.

(2.) The voluntary preferring a ſuffering Condition rather than ſinning againſt God.

(1.) As to the common Accidents of Life. It is obſerved by the *Moraliſts*, *that it is a harder thing to bear things that are troubleſome, than to abſtain from things that are pleaſant:* The Senſe of Pain and Suffering being much more uneaſie, than the forbearing what is delightfull; which is only croſſing a natural Inclination. And though many Perſons chooſe rather to yield to their vicious Inclinations than to avoid the Pains and Diſeaſes which follow them; yet that is becauſe they look on them as uncertain and at a Diſtance, and hope they may eſcape them.

Ariſtot. Mor. l. 3. c. 12. *Aug.* 83. q. 36.

But when it is certain and preſent, humane Nature is very tender and ſenſible of Pain and ſhrinks from it; and requires inward Courage to ſupport it ſelf under it. It is obſerved by the Roman Orator, that a peculiar kind of Cou-

Courage is neceſſary for ſuffering Pains and Diſeaſes; for many that have been brave Men in the Field, yet could not *viriliter ægrotare*, behave themſelves like Men when they came to be ſick. The truth is, all Mankind abhorr ſuffering ſo much, that one of the great Inducements to the ſtudy of *Morality* of old, was to find out ſome *Antidotes* againſt the common Accidents of Life.

For they ſoon found there were ſome Sufferings incident to humane Nature, which all the Art and Skill of the wiſeſt Men could never prevent. Our Bodies are continually ſubject to Pains, to Diſeaſes, to Corruption and Diſſolution. Our Eſtates to Violence, Fraud and Misfortune. Our Houſes and Cities to Flames, to Earthquakes, to Inundations. Our Friends and Relations are all liable to the ſame Calamities with our ſelves, and that makes our Trouble the greater.

What now ſhould wiſe Men do? Can they hope to ſtem the Tide, and to turn back the Stream? No, that is too violent for them. Can they raiſe any Banks or Sea-Walls againſt them to keep them out? All ſuch are vain and fruitleſs. What then? Shall they ſtrip

them-

themſelves of all the Comforts of Life, that they may leave nothing to Misfortune? So ſome did, to no great purpoſe, unleſs they could ſhake off their Paſſions too. But this doth not look like *Magnanimity*, but Cowardice; not overcoming an Enemy, but running away from him. By the ſame Method, they muſt go naked to avoid Robbery; and live on the Tops of Mountains to eſcape a Deluge.

But ſome thought theſe things look'd moſt terrible at a Diſtance; whereas if they conſider'd how common they were, they would learn to bear them better. But *Carneades* ſaid well, *Malevoli animi Solatium eſt turba miſerorum*; it is a kind of ill-natur'd Comfort which one draws from the commonneſs of Calamities. And after all it is no real Satisfaction to a Man's mind, to think that ſo many ſuffer as he doth; it is like the unnatural Pleaſure of Revenge, which one Man takes in anothers Pain.

There is one thing it ſerves well for, and that is to ſhew the Folly of great Impatience under ſuch things which the reſt of Mankind bear. Thus *Julian* in his Epiſtle to *Amerius* relates a Story of *Democritus* his dealing with *Darius* upon

Epiſt. 37.

upon the loss of his beloved Wife. After several ineffectual Ways of comforting him; at last he asked him, whether bringing her to Life would not put an End to his Grief? No doubt of it. But how should this be done? Let me alone for that, said the Philosopher, if you will provide me all the things I shall desire in order to it. After great Care taken in providing many things for him, *Darius* asked him if he had all he wanted? No, said he; there is one thing more I must have, and you are the most likely Person to furnish me with it. In short, you must get me three Names to be put upon her Monument of such Persons who have gone to their Graves without Sorrow or Trouble; and you, said he, have very large and populous Dominions, and no doubt if such a thing be to be had, you can procure it. *Darius* was struck with this, and after some consideration said, *he doubted he could not. Why then*, said the Philosopher smiling, *are not you ashamed to be guilty of so much Folly as to be so exceedingly cast down under such a Calamity, as though you were the only Person in the World that underwent it?* This was agreeable enough to his Humour

mour in expoſing the *Folly* of *Mankind*; which was a Subject large enough for his whole Life; but he was too pleaſant upon it.

I do not deny but the *Moraliſts* did find out ſome very uſefull Conſiderations to bear Men up under the common Accidents of Life; but thoſe of greateſt Moment, were ſuch as are much improved by *Chriſtianity*; *viz.* the Wiſdom of Providence, the Uſefulneſs of Trials, the Benefit of Patience, and the Expectation of a better State.

(2.) As to voluntary and choſen Sufferings. We have in Scripture ſeveral extraordinary Inſtances of this kind of *Magnanimity*; ſuch as *Abraham*'s leaving his Kindred and Country and going he knew not whither on God's Command, and his readineſs to ſacrifice his Son; which argued an entire Sacrifice of himſelf to the Will of God. Such was *Moſes* his *chooſing rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of God than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Pharaoh*'s Court. Such was the Son of God's chooſing to ſuffer for our ſakes, with admirable Reſignation to the Divine Will; and praying for his Perſecutors under the greateſt Agonies on the Croſs. Such was the Apoſtle's

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Reſolution and Courage, when *they rejoyced to be accounted worthy to ſuffer for the ſake of Chriſt*; when they were *more than Conquerors* in the midſt of Perſecutions. And truly the *Magnanimity* of Suffering rather than Sinning, was never ſo much ſhewn to the World as in the Caſe of the *Primitive Chriſtians*. There were ſome few *Heroick* Inſtances of Suffering for Truth among the Heathens; but they were no more to be compared with the numerous Examples of the Primitive Church than the Miracles of the *Veſtal Virgins* were with thoſe of the *Apoſtles*.

It could not but amaze the common ſort of Spectators of *Rome*, who were wont to ſee the *Gladiators*, (who were either hired or condemned to that cruel Entertainment of others with their blood) to behold a ſort of grave and ſerious Perſons expoſe themſelves to ſo much Torment and Cruelty, when ſo ſmall a matter as burning a little Incenſe would ſet them free. This was a new Spectacle to the World, and it could not but put them upon thinking what ſtrange ſort of *Philoſophy* this was, which inſpired ordinary Perſons with ſuch a *Magnanimity* in ſuffering. They

had never found those who pretended to *Philosophy* among them very fond of Suffering for the Doctrine they taught. They rather liked the Example of *Aristotle* than *Socrates*; who when the People of *Athens* were enraged against him, withdrew to *Chalcis*; and when he was upbraided with it, made a witty Excuse, *that he had no mind the City of* Athens *should sin twice against Philosophy.* Whereas the *Christians* were so forward to suffer for their Doctrine, that it was imputed as a Fault to them; and it appears by *Tertullian* that some out-went the bounds of *Christianity* in offering themselves too freely to it. This made such as *Antoninus* and others impute all their Sufferings to *an invincible Obstinacy and a sort of Madness which possessed them*: which had been easily confuted, if they would have had the Patience to have examin'd the Reasons and Grounds of their Religion, as they did the peculiar Doctrines of the several Sects of *Philosophers*. But this is not all which *Christian Magnanimity* doth imply; for it is not only *a Spirit of Power, but of Love and of a sound Mind.* And so it hath

Tertull ad Scap.

Antonin. l. 11. Sect. 3.

Arrian. l. 4. c. 7.

II. A

II A Reſpect to the *Humours* and *Paſſions* of Men. And truly, there is ſuch a Variety and uncertainty in them; ſo much Folly and Miſtake; ſo much Prejudice and Peeviſhneſs in ſome; ſo much Wilfulneſs and Stiffneſs in others; ſo little Regard to the true Intereſts of Religion and Vertue, under all the Pretences to it; that thoſe who ſincerely deſire to promote them had need of *Magnanimity* to bear them up againſt ſuch Humours and Diſtempers of Men's minds. *Ariſtotle* hath well obſerved that *Magnanimity* doth go beyond the Conſideration of Dangers. *It makes a man more ready to do Kindneſſes than to receive them; and to forget Injuries.* I add, *and to forgive them*; for elſe, it is rather want of Memory, than Magnanimity. It is well he adds one thing, *viz.* that he that hath Magnanimity is Αὐτάρκης, *Contented within himſelf*; ſo he had need to be; for he will find very little Satisfaction abroad, eſpecially in an Age when *Sincerity* is almoſt loſt: when Men have uſed themſelves to ſo much Hypocriſie and Diſſimulation with God and Man, that they can zealouſly pretend to love what they would

Mor. l. 4. c. 3.

be glad to ruine, and cry up Peace and Unity only to get an Opportunity to destroy them. But still true Magnanimity keeps a Man's own mind at Ease, and *makes him to govern himself*, as the same Philosopher observes, *with due Temper and Moderation in all things*. Such a one is not only easie to himself, but to all others, as far as is consistent with his Duty. For a mind truly great, hath nothing of Bitterness, or Sowerness; Peevishness, or Ill-will to the rest of mankind. All malice and cruelty argue a mean and base Spirit. The more noble and generous any Tempers are, the more tender and compassionate they are, the more ready to oblige, the more easie to forgive, the more willing to be reconciled.

But to be more particular, there are two things implied in *this Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind.*

(1.) The making all reasonable Allowances for the Infirmities of others. It makes men to consider the Prejudices of Education; the Variety and Weakness of most men's Judgments; the Power of Perswasion; the Biass of Parties; and the Shame and Reproach which Persons undergo that break off from

from them, after they have been once enſnared by them. On theſe Accounts it makes them rather pity than triumph over the Follies of mankind. There are two things which a great mind doth moſt abhorr in Religion, and are moſt directly contrary to *a Spirit of Love and a ſound Mind*; and theſe are *Hypocriſie* and *Cruelty*; which make men falſe to God, and Enemies to mankind. Theſe two often go together; and although they are masked under a Pretence of Religion, yet there are no two things more oppoſite to the true Spirit and Deſign of it. *St. John* concludes that man to have no true Love to God who doth not love his Brother. *He that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* And we may argue the other way; If a man doth not love God, how can he love his Brother? When the Love of God is the beſt Foundation for Charity and Kindneſs to our Brethren; who were at firſt made after the Image of God, and have it again renewed in them by the Power of Divine Grace *in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*. And even where that doth not appear, yet there is a Tenderneſs and

1 Joh. 4. 20.

Eph. 4. 24.

Compaſſion due to mankind, as far as is conſiſtent with the Order and Government of the World.

(2.) The *Spirit of Love and of a ſound Mind*, conſiſts in laying aſide private Animoſities and Heats for a publick and general Good. That is a thing too great and too ſacred, to be expoſed and ridiculed, as though it were only a popular Pretence for Faction and Sedition. Whereas nothing is more directly oppoſite to it; for therefore it is called Faction and Sedition, becauſe it is againſt it. If it hath been abuſed by Men of ill Minds, ſo have the beſt things in the World; but they do not loſe their Nature and Excellency by it. If there be not ſuch a thing as a common Good, whence comes any Man's obligation to preſerve Order and Government, and to ſeek the Safety and Welfare of his Country, although it may be to the hazard of his own Life? If there be ſuch a thing, it deſerves our Regard in the firſt Place, and we ought to lay aſide all Prejudices, and mutual Animoſities and the Intereſts of particular Parties, and heartily to promote that which is our true common Intereſt, as we are Engliſh-men and Proteſtants

ſtants of the Church of *England*; which is a great and conſiderable Part of the Chriſtian Church, and the Chief of the Reformation. It is hard for any not to ſee that the whole Proteſtant Intereſt lies at ſtake; and that the Preſervation of it depends very much on our Conduct and Union at this time.

But if we find any to be humourſome and peeviſh, any to ſtruggle more for the Intereſt of a Party to make it uppermoſt, than for our common Good, although it be a very ſad Conſideration and bodes very ill to us all, yet we have that poor Comfort left us, that Men were as ill diſpoſed even in the Apoſtle's times. *For*, ſaith St. *Paul*, (at a time when one would have thought they ſhould have been much better inclined) *All men ſeek their own, not the things which are Jeſus Chriſts.* I hope it cannot be ſaid of *all* now; but I fear it is ſo true of too many, that it is one of the worſt *Symptoms* of the preſent State of our Affairs. And that which makes it more deplorable is, that ſome Men have entertained ſuch Suſpicion and Jealouſie of each other, that he that goes about to reconcile them, inſtead of making them Friends, Phil. 2. 21.

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is look'd on as a common Enemy. I am afraid there is not Sincerity and Integrity enough left to be a Foundation for uniting ſeveral Parties among us; at leſt there wants an Opinion of it. And as long as there are ſuch Miſtruſts and Jealouſies, the greateſt Integrity is ſo far uſeleſs.

Some learned and good Men have been of late apt to perſwade themſelves and others, that the glorious and happy Times of the Church are coming on; I could be glad to be of their opinion; for it is a comfortable thing to a man who travels in an ill Road and with bad Company, whom he is perpetually afraid of, to ſee at a diſtance a pleaſant and ſafe Country, where he ſhall be rid of his Fears and Dangers. But I confeſs, I cannot much pleaſe my ſelf with ſuch thoughts, till I ſee the Tempers of Men's minds begin to change towards one another. If I could once ſee the *Spirit of Love and a ſound Mind* prevail among us; if men would be contented to ſacrifice their Humours and Piques to the publick Intereſt; in ſhort, if there were any hopes Men would be wiſe and good, there were then a great Foundation for hope, that

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all things would be ſettled among us, ſo as to continue for ſucceeding Generations.

But if Men will perſiſt in their own wilfull Humours; if they had rather all ſhould periſh, than they not compaſs their own Ends; we need no foreign Enemies to come in upon us, we ſhall ſoon come to that height of Animoſity, *as to bite and devour one another*; Gal. 5. 15. and then it is an eaſie Inference, *that we ſhall be conſumed one of another.* I am far from thinking our Caſe deſperate; for I hope Men have not loſt all their Senſe and Zeal for our common Intereſt; but if Men's Heats and Paſſions increaſe and grow fiercer, a Man needs not pretend to prophecy to foretell what the dreadfull Conſequence will be.

The true Spirit of Religion ſeems to be buried in Men's warm Contentions about it; and ſome have pretended to a ſort of Zeal without Conſcience, to Religion without Faith, and to Scruples without common Honeſty.

If ever God deſigns to do us good, there muſt be a great Alteration in Men's Tempers and Manners. We muſt have more Sincerity and Integrity

grity among us; the want of which hath caused such a general Mistrust of one another; that if *Faith* were to save the Nation, I am afraid there is hardly enough left in it. And it looks like one of the Symptoms of the Day of Judgment upon us: For, *if the Son of Man should come, he would hardly find Faith upon Earth.*

But instead of discoursing of *Magnanimity*, I am sensible I have run into the Object and Reason of our Fears. But therefore to conclude all, I shall speak briefly to the last Particular, which was,

(3.) To consider what Arguments and Means there are to support us against our Fears; or to attain to that *Christian Magnanimity* I have been discoursing of. And there are two great Arguments which Christianity doth particularly recommend to us.

1. Let things go as ill as we can fear in this World; if we are sincere Christians, there is a far better State to come; to which we shall be admitted when we are once out of this troublesome and sinfull World. There will be no Hurries and Confusions, no Jealousies and Suspicions, no Piques and Ani-

Animoſities. The higheſt Regions of the Air are the moſt calm and ſerene; all the Clouds and Storms and bluſtering Winds are below and ariſe from the *Atmoſphere*. If our Minds were more looſe from the World we ſhould be more at quiet: For, at the bottom, the Conſiderations of this World make Men ſo troubleſome in it. It is Honour or Power or Riches which make them ſo unquiet, and endeavouring to ſupplant and undermine one another: If Men could learn to be content with that which they pretend was all they ſo long and ſo impatiently deſired, there might be ſome hopes of ſeeing ſomething like Peace and Unity among us: but if Liberty be thought to ſignifie nothing without Power, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that Power will ſignifie nothing, unleſs it be all in their own Hands. And what can they imagine the reſt of the Nation will do? Will they ſuffer an eſtabliſhed Church, and ſuch a one as ours is (which I think an *Apoſtolical Church*, as to Doctrine, Worſhip and Government, if there be any now in the World) to be run down with the violent Heats of ſome

ſome men, and look on as wholly unconcerned? They are extremely miſtaken in the Temper of the Nation who think ſo. But if Men will not be quiet, when they have all they pretended to deſire, what can we expect but further Animoſities will diſcourage our Friends, animate our common Enemies, and expoſe us all to Confuſion, if not to Ruine. If Men loved this World leſs and another better, they would be more quiet here, and be more careſull to prepare for that better State. *If our Converſation were in Heaven*, as it ought to be, with what Contempt ſhould we look down upon the buſie Deſigns, the reſtleſs Cares, the vain Hopes and the perplexing Fears of the greateſt Part of Mankind? Then we ſhould have more Peace and Tranquillity in our Minds while we live, and greater Satisfaction when we come to die. For Integrity and Innocency will keep us moſt from giving diſturbance to others, and from finding any in our own Breaſts. *Whoſo hearkeneth unto Wiſdom, ſhall dwell ſafely and ſhall be quiet from the Fear of Evil.*

Prov. 1. 33.

2. We

2. We are aſſured that we are under the conſtant Care of Divine Providence. The Tranquillity of our Minds in this World depends very much upon the Eſteem we have of Providence and the Truſt we repoſe in God. What makes Children paſs their time without ſolicitous thoughts about themſelves, but the Confidence they have in the Wiſdom and Care of their Parents? What makes Paſſengers lie down at reſt in a Ship at Sea, but becauſe they truſt to the Conduct of their Pilot? We cannot alter the Methods of Providence by all our Solicitude; God will govern the World by his own Meaſures and not by ours. The Government is his, the Duty of Subminiſſion is ours. Let us not then be peeviſh and quarrelſome at what he doth; but make the beſt Uſe of any extraordinary Inſtance of his Providence which ſeems to be intended for our Good, unleſs we turn it another Way.

But it is not enough to be meerly contented with Providence; but we ought to be active and uſefull in our own Places to promote the common Intereſt; and not to repine and murmur

mur at what is neceſſary for the Support of it. Let us not torment our ſelves with Fears of what may and what may not happen; but let us commit our ſelves to God in well-doing as to our Creatour and Preſerver.

SER-

SERMON VI.

Preached at

St. *Laurence-Jewry*,

April *the* 7th, 1691.

1 Timothy I. 15.

This is a faithfull saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief.

IF these Words were to be understood without any Restriction or Limitation *that Christ Jesus came into the World to save sinners*, they would overthrow

the great Deſign of the Goſpel, and make its excellent Precepts uſeleſs and ineffectual. For, to what purpoſe ſhould Men be put upon the ſevere Practice of Repentance, Mortification and a continued Courſe of a Holy Life, if the meer being *Sinners* did ſufficiently qualifie them for Salvation? This indeed would be thought a Doctrine *worthy of all Acceptation* by the *greateſt Sinners*; but it could not be *a faithfull ſaying*, being not agreeable either to the Nature of God, or Revelation of his Will by *Chriſt Jeſus*. But St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſuch *Sinners* as himſelf had been; *i. e.* ſuch as had been great Sinners, but had truly and ſincerely repented. *Of whom I am chief.* What then? Muſt we look on him as the Standard and Meaſure of ſuch *Sinners* whom *Chriſt Jeſus* came to ſave? What will then become of all thoſe who have been Sinners of a higher Rank than ever he was? It's true in the Verſes before the Text, he ſets out his Sins, as a humble Penitent is wont to do, with the worſt Colours and deepeſt Aggravations, *Who was before a blaſ-*
Verſ. 13. *phemer and a perſecutor, and injurious*; but yet he adds, *that he obtained Mercy becauſe he did it ignorantly, in unbelief.*

lief. How then is St. *Paul* the *Chief of Sinners?* Are Sins of *Ignorance* and *Miſtake* the greateſt of Sins, for which Chriſt died? Is there no *Expiation* for any other by *Jeſus Chriſt?* What will become then of all ſuch who ſin againſt Knowledge and Conſcience, and not *in Ignorance and Unbelief?* Can none of theſe hope for Mercy by *Chriſt Jeſus*, although they do truly repent? But *the Blood of Chriſt* is ſaid elſewhere *to cleanſe us from all Sin*; not, while we continue in them, but if we repent and forſake them. And *Jeſus Chriſt* is ſaid *to be a Propitiation for our Sins; and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World.* And therefore this Expreſſion of St. *Paul* notes his great Humility and deep Senſe of his own Sins; but doth not exclude others from the hopes of Pardon whoſe Sins have other Aggravations than his had. For, if we leave out the laſt words as peculiar to his Caſe, yet the other contain in them a true Propoſition and of the greateſt Importance to Mankind; *This is a faithfull ſaying and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave ſinners.*

1 Joh. 1. 7.

Ch. 2. v. 2.

This, you may ſay, is a matter out of all doubt among all ſuch who hope for Salvation by *Chriſt Jeſus*; for all are agreed, that one way or other we are to be *ſaved by him.* But there is great Difficulty as to the Way of *ſaving ſinners* by *Chriſt Jeſus*; whether by *the Doctrine and Example of the Man Chriſt Jeſus, by the Power he attained through his Sufferings*; Or, *by the Eternal Son of God's aſſuming our Nature, and ſuffering in our ſtead in order to the reconciling God to us, and making a Propitiation for our Sins.* Theſe are two very different *Hypotheſes* or Notions of *Chriſt's coming to ſave ſinners*; and the former ſeems more eaſie to be underſtood and believed; and the other ſeems to have inſuperable Difficulties in point of Reaſon; and to turn our Religion into *Myſteries*, which expoſe our Faith and make Chriſtianity appear contemptible to Men of Senſe and Underſtanding. Is it not therefore much better to embrace ſuch a Scheme of it, as will have the leaſt Objection againſt it, that ſo Men of Reaſon may not be tempted to Infidelity, and Men of Superſtition may not under the Colour

lour of *Myſteries* bring in the moſt abſurd and unreaſonable Doctrines?

Theſe are plauſible Inſinuations, and would be apt to prevail on conſidering Men's minds, if they were to form and make a Religion that might be moſt accommodated to the *Genius* and *Humour* of the Age they live in. And truly no Men (by their own Authority) can pretend to a Right to impoſe on others any *Myſteries of Faith*, or any ſuch things which are above their Capacity to underſtand. But that is not our Caſe; for we all profeſs to believe and receive *Chriſtianity* as a *Divine Revelation*; and God (we ſay) may require from us the belief of what we may not be able to comprehend, eſpecially if it relates to himſelf, or ſuch things which are conſequent upon the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature. Therefore our buſineſs is to conſider, whether any ſuch things be contained in that *Revelation* which we all own; and if they be, we are bound to believe them, although we are not able to comprehend them.

Now here are two remarkable *Characters* in theſe Words, by which we may examine theſe different *Hypothe-*

ſes concerning the way of *Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt.*

I. *It is a faithfull ſaying*, and therefore muſt be contained in that Revelation which God hath made concerning our Salvation by Chriſt.

II. *It is worthy of all Acceptation*; i. e. moſt uſefull and beneficial to Mankind.

Now by theſe two I ſhall proceed in the Examination of them.

I. Which is moſt agreeable to the revealed Will of God.

II. Which doth offer faireſt for the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind.

I. Which is moſt agreeable to the revealed Will of God. For that we are ſure is the moſt *faithfull ſaying*; ſince Men of Wit and Reaſon may deceive us, but God cannot. When the Apoſtles firſt preached this Doctrine to the World, they were not bound to believe what they affirmed to be *a faithfull ſaying* till they gave ſufficient Evidence of their Authority from God, by the wonderfull

derfull Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt. But now this *faithfull ſaying* is contained in the Books of the *New Teſtament*, by which we are to judge of the Truth of all *Chriſtian* Doctrines. And when two different Senſes of Places of Scripture are offer'd, we are to conſider, which is moſt reaſonable to be preferr'd. And herein we are allow'd to exerciſe our Reaſon as much as we pleaſe; and the more we do ſo, the ſooner we ſhall come to ſatisfaction in this matter.

Now according to Reaſon we may judge that Senſe to be preferr'd,

(1.) Which is moſt plain and eaſie and agreeable to the moſt received Senſe of Words; not that which is forced and intricate, or which puts improper and *metaphorical* Senſes upon Words which are commonly taken in other Senſes; eſpecially when it is no Sacramental thing, which in its own Nature is Figurative.

(2.) That which ſuits moſt with the Scope and Deſign not only of the particular Places, but of the whole *New Teſtament*; which is, to magnifie God and to depreſs Man; to ſet forth, the infinite Love and Condeſcention of God *in giving his Son to be a Propitiati-*

on for our Sins; to ſet up the Worſhip of one *true God* in Oppoſition to *Creatures*; to repreſent and declare the mighty Advantages Mankind receive by the *Sufferings* of *Chriſt Jeſus*.

(3.) That which hath been generally received in the *Chriſtian Church* to be the Senſe of thoſe places. For, we are certain, this was always look on as a matter of great Concernment to all Chriſtians; and they had as great Capacity of underſtanding the Senſe of the Apoſtles; and the Primitive Church had greater helps for knowing it than others at ſo much greater Diſtance. And therefore the Senſe is not to be taken from modern *Inventions*, or *Criticiſms*; or Pretences to *Revelation*; but that which was at firſt deliver'd to the *Chriſtian Church* and hath been ſince received and embraced by it in the ſeveral Ages; and hath been moſt ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, when it hath met with Oppoſition, as founded on *Scripture* and the *general Conſent* of the *Chriſtian Church*.

(4.) That which beſt agrees with the *Characters* of thoſe Perſons from whom we receive the Chriſtian Faith; and thoſe are *Chriſt Jeſus* and his *holy Apoſtles*.

ſtles. For, if their *Authority* be loſt, our Religion is gone; and their Authority depends upon their *Sincerity* and *Faithfulneſs*, and Care to inform the World aright in matters of ſo great Importance.

(1.) I begin with the Character which the Apoſtles give of *Chriſt Jeſus* himſelf; which is, that he was a Perſon of the greateſt Humility and Condeſcenſion, that he did not aſſume to himſelf that which he might juſtly have done. For let the Words of St. *Paul* be underſtood either as to the *Nature*, or *Dignity* of Chriſt, it is certain that they muſt imply thus much, that when *Chriſt Jeſus* was here on Earth, he was not of a vain aſſuming humour, that he did not boaſt of himſelf, nor magnifie his own Greatneſs, but was contented to be look'd on as other Men; although he had at that time far greater and diviner Excellency in him than the World would believe. Leſs than this cannot be made of thoſe Words of the Apoſtle, *Who being in the form of God, be* Phil. 2. 6, 7. *thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himſelf of no Reputation and took upon him the form of a Servant.*

Now

Now this being the *Character* given of him let us consider what he doth affirm concerning himself. For although he was far from drawing the People after him, by setting forth his own Perfection; yet upon just Occasions, when the *Jews* contested with him, he did assert such things, which must savour of Vanity and Ostentation, or else must imply that he was the *Eternal Son* of *God*. For, all Mankind are agreed that the highest Degree of Ambition lies in affecting Divine Honour, or for a meer Man to be thought a *God*. How severely did God punish *Herod* for being pleased with the People's Folly in crying out, *the Voice of*
Act. 12. 22. *God and not of Man?* And therefore he could never have born with such positive Assertions and such repeated Defences of his being *the Son of God* in such a manner as implied his being so from Eternity. This in his Disputes with the *Jews* he affirms several times,
Joh. 6. 32, *that he came down from Heaven*, not in
33. a *Metaphorical* but in a proper Sense, as appears by those words, *What and if*
38. 50. *ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up*
58. 62. *where he was before?* In another *Confe-*
Joh. 8. 58. *rence* he asserted, *that he was before Abraham.*

braham. Which the *Jews* ſo literally underſtood, that without a *Metaphor* *they went about to ſtone him*; little imagining that by *Abraham* the calling of the *Gentiles* was to be underſtood. But above all, is that Expreſſion which he uſed to the *Jews* at another Conference, *I and my Father are one*; which they underſtood in ſuch a manner that immediately *they took up ſtones to have ſtoned him.* What means all this Rage of the *Jews* againſt him? What? For ſaying *that he had Unity of Conſent with his Father?* No certainly: *But the Jews miſunderſtood him.* Let us ſuppoſe it; would not our *Saviour* have immediately explained himſelf to prevent ſo dangerous a Miſconſtruction? But he asked them, what it was they ſtoned him for? They anſwered him directly and plainly, *becauſe that thou being a man makeſt thy ſelf God.* This was home to the Purpoſe. And here was the time for him to have denied it, if it had not been ſo. But doth he deny it? Doth he ſay, it would be *Blaſphemy* in him to own it? No; but he goes about to defend it; and proves it to be no *Blaſphemy for him to ſay that he was the Son of God*; i. e. ſo *as to be God*, as the *Jews* under-

v. 59.

Joh. 10. 30.

v. 31.

v. 32, 33.

v. 36.

underſtood it. Can we imagine that a *meer Man* knowing himſelf to be ſuch, ſhould aſſume this to himſelf; and yet *God* to bear witneſs to him not only by *Miracles*, but by a *Voice from Heaven*, wherein he was called his *beloved Son in whom he was well pleaſed*? Could God be pleaſed with a mortal, finite, deſpicable Creature, as the *Jews* thought him, that aſſumed to himſelf to be *God* and maintained and defended it among his own People, in a ſolemn *Conference* at a very publick Place, in one of the *Portico's* of the Temple? And this he perſiſted in to the laſt. For, when *the High Prieſt adjured him by the living God to tell, whether he were the Chriſt the Son of God*, (for he, no doubt, had heard of the *Reſult* of this *Conference* in *Solomon's Porch*) *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou haſt ſaid.* St. *Mark*, more expreſly, *Jeſus ſaid I am.* And this was the *Blaſphemy*, for which they put him to death; as appears by the *Evangeliſts*. So that this ought to be a Diſpute only between *Jews* and *Chriſtians*; ſince it was the very Point, for which they condemned him to death. And in his laſt moſt divine Prayer juſt before his Suffering, he owns the *Glory* which he had

Matth. 3. 17.
Matth. 26. 63.
v. 64.
Mark 14. 62.
v. 64.
Matth. 26. 66.

had *with the Father* before the World had a Being. *And now, O Father, glorifie thou me with the glory which I had with thee, before the World was.* Was this nothing but the *Glory* which *God* had deſigned to give him? This is ſo far from being peculiar to Chriſt, that it is common to all whom *God* deſigns to glorifie; and takes away the diſtinction between the *Decree* and the *Execution* of it. Luk. 22. 7. Joh. 17. 5.

(2.) As to the *Apoſtles*, the Reaſon we believe their Teſtimony is, that they were Men of great Sincerity and Plainneſs, and of great Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God. And according to this *Character*, let us examine what they ſay concerning *Chriſt Jeſus*.

He that was moſt converſant with him, and beloved by him, and lived to ſee his *Divinity* conteſted by ſome, and denied by others, is moſt ample in ſetting it forth in his Admirable, Sublime, and Divine Introduction to his Goſpel. Which all the Wit of Mankind can never make tolerable Senſe of, if they deny *Chriſt*'s being the *Eternal Son of God*; and it is he, that hath preſerved thoſe *Conferences* with the *Jews*, wherein he aſſerts his own *Divinity*. John 1. 1, 2, &c.

St. *Paul*

St. *Paul* was a Stranger to him while he lived; but at the same time when he was so zealous to perswade the *Gentiles* to the *Worship* of *God* and not of *Creatures*, he calls him *God, over all*
Rom. 9. 5. *blessed for evermore.* And when he
Rom. 1. 20. saith, that *the Eternal Power and Godhead are known by the Creation of the*
Col. 1. 16. *World*, he attributes *the Creation of all things* to *Christ*, applying to him those
Heb. 1. 2. words of the *Psalmist*, *Thou Lord in the*
10. *beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth and the Heaven, the Work of thy hands.* Which cannot be understood of any *Metaphorical Creation.*

And after the strictest Examination of Copies, those will be found the best, which have that Reading on which our Translation is grounded. *And without*
1 Tim. 3. *Controversie great is the Mystery of God-*
16. *liness, God was manifest in the Flesh.* So that *God's being manifest in the Flesh* is made a great Part of the *Mystery* of *Christianity.*

But here arises a Difficulty, which deserves to be consider'd; *i. e.* "If "there were nothing in the Christian "Doctrine, but the Way of *Saving sin-*"*ners* by the Doctrine and Example "of Christ, there would be little Ob-

"jection

" jection to be made to it; ſince the
" obtaining Eternal Life is certainly
" the beſt thing can be propoſed to
" Mankind, and the Precepts of Chriſt
" are Divine and Spiritual, plain and
" eaſie to be underſtood, and agreea-
" ble to the Reaſon of Mankind; but
" many other things are impoſed on
" Men as neceſſary to be believed con-
" cerning *Chriſt Jeſus*, as to his *Divi-*
" *nity*, *Incarnation*, and the *Hypoſtati-*
" *cal Union* of both Natures, which
" perplex and confound our Under-
" ſtandings; and yet theſe things are
" not only deliver'd as *Myſteries* of *the*
" *Chriſtian Faith*; but the Belief of
" them is required as neceſſary to the
" Salvation of Sinners; whereas, if
" they are revealed they are no longer
" *Myſteries*; and if they are not re-
" vealed, how come they to be made
" Articles of Faith? The Scripture
" knows of no other *Myſteries of Faith*
" but ſuch as were hidden before the
" Revelation of them, but ſince they
" are revealed they are plain and open
" to all Men's Capacities; and there-
" fore it is a great Injury to the Plain-
" neſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel to
" impoſe ſuch incomprehenſible My-
" ſteries,

" ſteries, as neceſſary Articles of Faith?
" and it is abuſing the Credulity of
" Mankind, to make ſuch things ne-
" ceſſary to be believed, which are im-
" poſſible to be underſtood. But thoſe
" who have ever loved to deceive and
" abuſe the reſt of the World, have been
" always fond of the Name of *Myſte-*
" *ries*; and therefore all ſuch things
" are to be ſuſpected, which come un-
" der that Name. For, all ſuch Points
" which will not bear Examination,
" muſt be wrapt up and reverenced
" under the Name of *Myſteries*, that is,
" of things to be ſwallow'd without
Diſcourſe of the Word Myſtery, &c. p. 5. " being underſtood. *But the Scripture*
" *never calls that a Myſtery which is in-*
" *comprehenſible in it ſelf, though never*
" *ſo much revealed.*

This is the main force of the Objection, which I ſhall endeavour to remove by ſhewing,

(1.) That God may juſtly require from us in general, the Belief of what we cannot comprehend.

(2.) That which way ſoever the Way of Salvation by *Chriſt* be explained, there will be ſomething of that Nature found in it; and that thoſe

those who reject the Mysteries of Faith run into greater Difficulties than those who assert them.

(3.) That no more is required as a necessary Article of Faith than what is plainly and clearly revealed.

(1.) That God may justly require from us in general, the Belief of what we cannot comprehend. It is to very little Purpose to enquire whether the Word *Mystery* in *Scripture* be applied to such particular Doctrines, whose Substance is revealed, but the manner of them is incomprehensible by us; for why may not we make use of such a Word whereby to express things truly revealed, but above our Comprehension? We are certain the Word *Mystery* is used for things far less difficult and abstruse; and why may it not then be fitly applied to such matters, which are founded on Divine Revelation, but yet are too deep for us to go to the bottom of them? Are there not *Mysteries* in Arts, *Mysteries* in Nature, *Mysteries* in Providence? And what Absurdity is there to call those *Mysteries*, which in some Measure are known, but in much

greater unknown to us? Altho' therefore in the Language of Scripture it be granted, that the word *Myſtery* is moſt frequently applied *to things before hidden, but now revealed*, yet there is no Incongruity in calling that a *Myſtery*, which being revealed, hath yet ſomething in it which our underſtandings cannot reach to. But it is meer cavilling to inſiſt on a Word, if the Thing it ſelf be granted. The chief thing therefore to be done is, to ſhew that God may require from us the belief of ſuch things which are incomprehenſible by us. For, *God* may require any thing from us, which it is reaſonable for us to do; if it be then reaſonable for us to give aſſent where the manner of what *God* hath revealed is not comprehended, then *God* may certainly require it from us. Hath not God revealed to us that *in ſix days he made Heaven and Earth and all that is therein?* But is it not reaſonable for us to believe this, unleſs we are able to comprehend the manner of *God*'s production of things? Here we have ſomething revealed and that plainly enough, *viz.* that *God created all things*, and yet, here is a *Myſtery* remaining as to the manner of doing it.

Hath

Hath not God plainly revealed that there ſhall be a *Reſurrection* of the dead? and muſt we think it unreaſonable to believe it, till we are able to comprehend all the Changes of the Particles of Matter from the *Creation* to the General *Reſurrection*? But it is ſaid *that there is no Contradiction in this, but there is in the Myſtery of the Trinity and Incarnation.* It is ſtrange Boldneſs in Men to talk thus of *Monſtrous Contradictions* in things above their Reach. The *Atheiſts* may as well ſay, *Infinite Power* is a *Monſtrous Contradiction*; and *God's Immenſity* and his other unſearchable Perfections are *Monſtrous Paradoxes* and *Contradictions.* Will Men never learn to diſtinguiſh between *Numbers* and the Nature of *Things*? For *three* to be *one* is a *Contradiction* in *Numbers*; but whether an Infinite Nature can communicate it ſelf to three *different Subſiſtences* without ſuch a *Diviſion* as is among created Beings, muſt not be determin'd by bare *Numbers*, but by the abſolute *Perfections* of the Divine Nature; which muſt be owned to be above our Comprehenſion.

Obſervations on Dr. Wallis his four Letters, p. 4.

For let us examine ſome of thoſe *Perfections* which are moſt clearly re-

vealed and we ſhall find this true. The *Scripture* plainly reveals, that *God* is from *everlaſting to everlaſting*; *that he was and is and is to come*; but ſhall we not believe the Truth of this till we are able to fathom the *Abyſs* of God's *Eternity*? I am apt to think (and I have ſome thoughtfull Men concurring with me) that there is no greater Difficulty in the Conception of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, than there is of *Eternity*. Not, but that there is great Reaſon to believe it; but from hence it appears that our Reaſon may oblige us to believe ſome things which it is not poſſible for us to comprehend. We know that either God muſt have been for ever, or it is impoſſible he ever ſhould be; for if he ſhould come into Being when he was not, he muſt have ſome Cauſe of his Being; and that which was the firſt Cauſe would be God. But, if he was for ever he muſt be from himſelf; and what Notion or Conception can we have in our Minds concerning it? And yet, *Atheiſtical* Men can take no Advantage from hence; becauſe their own moſt abſurd *Hypotheſis* hath the very ſame Difficulty in it. For ſomething muſt have been for ever.

Pſal. 90. 2. Revel. 1. 4. c. 11. v. 17.

Biſterfield. c. *Grell.* p. 50.

Petav. de Trinit. l. 3. c. 9. Sect. 15.

And

And it is far more reaſonable to ſuppoſe it of an Infinite and Eternal Mind, which hath Wiſdom and Power and Goodneſs to give Being to other things, than of dull, ſtupid and ſenſeleſs Matter, which could never move it ſelf, nor give Being to any thing beſides. Here we have therefore a thing which muſt be owned by all; and yet ſuch a thing which can be conceived by none. Which ſhews the narrowneſs and ſhortneſs of our Underſtandings, and how unfit they are to be the Meaſures of the Poſſibilities of things. *Vain men would be wiſe*; they would fain go to the very bottom of things, when alaſs! they ſcarce underſtand the very Surface of them. They will allow no *Myſteries* in Religion; and yet every thing is a *Myſtery* to them. They cry out of *Cheats* and *Impoſtures* under the Notion of *Myſteries*; and yet there is not a Spire of Graſs but is a *Myſtery* to them; they will bear with nothing in *Religion* which they cannot comprehend, and yet there is ſcarce any thing in the World which they can comprehend. But above other things the *Divine Perfections*, even thoſe which are moſt abſolute and neceſſary are above their Reach. For let ſuch Men

try their Imaginations about God's *Eternity*, not meerly how he ſhould be from himſelf, but how God ſhould coexiſt with all the Differences of Times, and yet there be no Succeſſion in his own Being. I do not ſay there is ſuch Difficulty to conceive a Rock ſtanding ſtill when the Waves run by it; or the *Gnomon* of a Dial when the Shadow paſſes from one Figure to another; becauſe theſe are groſs un-active things; but the Difficulty is far greater where the Being is perfect and always active. For, where there is Succeſſion there is a paſſing out of not being in ſuch a duration into being in it; which is not conſiſtent with the abſolute Perfection of the Divine Nature. And therefore God muſt be all at once what he is, without any Reſpect to the Difference of Time paſt, preſent or to come. From whence *Eternity* was defined by *Boethius* to *be a perfect and complete Poſſeſſion all at once of everlaſting Life.* But how can we form any Conception in our Minds of that being all at once, which hath ſuch different Acts as muſt be meaſur'd by a long Succeſſion of Time? As, the creating and diſſolving the Frame of the World; the promiſing and ſending the *Meſſias*;

De Conſol. l. 5.

Meſſias; the declaring and executing a general Judgment; how can theſe things be conſiſtent with a permanent Inſtant, or a Continuance of being without Succeſſion? For, it is impoſſible for us in this Caſe, as to God's Eternity, to form a clear and diſtinct *Idea* in our Mind, of that which both *Reaſon* and *Revelation* convince us muſt be. The moſt we can make of our Conception of it is, that God hath neither Beginning of Being, nor End of Days; but that he always was, and always muſt be. And this is rather a neceſſary Concluſion from Reaſon and Scripture, than any diſtinct Notion or Conception of Eternity in our Minds. From whence it evidently follows, that God may reveal ſomething to us, which we are bound to believe, and yet after that Revelation the Manner of it may be incomprehenſible by us, and conſequently a *Myſtery* to us.

Hath not God revealed to us in *Scripture* the *Spirituality* of his own Nature? That *he is a Spirit* and therefore will *be worſhipp'd in Spirit and in Truth*; For, that is a true Reaſon why Spiritual Worſhip ſhould be moſt agreeable to him. Now, if we could have a clear, S Joh. 4. 24.

distinct, positive Notion in our Minds of God's Spiritual Nature, we might then pretend that there is nothing *mysterious* in this, since it is revealed.

But let such Men examine their own thoughts about this Matter; and try, whether the utmost they can attain to, be not something *Negative*, viz. because great Absurdities would follow if we attributed any thing *Corporeal* to God; for, then he must be compounded of Parts, and so he may be dissolved; then he must be confined to a certain Place, and not every-where present; he cannot have the Power of acting and self-determining which a meer Body hath not. For the clearest Notion we can have of *Body*, is, that it is made up of some things as parts of it, which may be separated from each other, and is confined to a certain Place, and hath no Power to move or act from it self. But some of these Men who cry down *Mysteries*, and magnifie Reason, to shew how slender their Pretences to Reason are, have asserted a *Corporeal God*, with *Shape* and *Figure*. It was indeed well thought of by those who would make a *Man* to be *God*, to bring *God* down as near to *Man* as might be. But how to recon-

reconcile the Notion of a Body with Infinite Perfections, is a *Myſtery* to me, and far above my Comprehenſion. But if it be no *Myſtery* to ſuch Men, they muſt either deny God's Infinite Perfections, or ſhew how a bodily Shape can be capable of them. But ſome Men can confound *Finite* and *Infinite*, *Body* and *Spirit*, *God* and *Man*, and yet are for no *Myſteries*; whereas theſe things are farther from our Reach and Comprehenſion, than any of thoſe Doctrines which they find fault with. But to proceed:

If we believe *Prophecy*, we muſt believe *God's fore-knowledge of future Events*: For, how could they be foretold if he did not foreknow them? And if he did fore-know thoſe which he did foretell, then it was either becauſe thoſe only were revealed to him which is inconſiſtent with the Divine Perfections; or that he doth fore-know all other Events and only thought fitting to reveal theſe: But how can they ſolve the Difficulties about *Divine Preſcience*? Is there no *Myſtery* in this? Nothing above their Comprehenſion? What then made their great Maſter deny it, as a thing above his Comprehenſion? Be- *Socin. Præl.* cauſe *c.* 11.

cauſe nothing can be fore-known but what hath a certain Cauſe, and therefore, if evil Actions be fore-told God muſt be the Cauſe of them, and Men will not be free Agents in them. And yet it is moſt certain, that the Sufferings of Chriſt by the Wickedneſs of Men, were fore-told. What then? Muſt we make God the Author of Sin? God forbid. Will the righteous Judge of all the Earth, puniſh Mankind for his own Acts, which they could not avoid? Then we muſt yield, that there is ſomething in the Manner of the *Divine Preſcience*, which is above our Comprehenſion. And the moſt ſearching and inquiſitive Men have been forc'd to yield it at laſt, as to the Connection between the Certainty of Preſcience and the Liberty of humane Actions. Is it not then much better to ſit down quietly at firſt, adoring the Infiniteneſs of God's incomprehenſible Perfections, than after all the Huffings and Diſputings of Men to ſay, *In ignorantiâ ſolâ quietem invenio*, as the great Schoolman did? Surely then, here is ſomething plainly revealed, and yet the Manner of it is ſtill a *Myſtery* to us.

Cajetan in 1. q. 22. art. 4.

I ſhall

I ſhall not now inſiſt on any more of the particular Attributes of God, but only in general I deſire to know, whether they believe them to be *finite* or *infinite*? If to be *finite*, then they muſt have certain Bounds and Limits which they cannot exceed; and that muſt either be from the Imperfection of Nature, or from a ſuperiour Cauſe, both which are repugnant to the very Being of God. If they believe them to be *Infinite*, how can they comprehend them? We are ſtrangely puzzled in plain, ordinary, finite things; but it is madneſs to pretend to comprehend what is *Infinite*; and yet if the Perfections of God be not *Infinite* they cannot belong to Him.

I ſhall only add, in Conſequence to this Aſſertion, *That if nothing is to be believed, but what may be comprehended*, the very *Being of God* muſt be rejected too. And therefore I deſire all ſuch who talk ſo warmly againſt any *Myſteries in Religion* to conſider whoſe Work it is they are doing; even theirs who under this Pretence go about to overthrow all Religion. "For, ſay they, "*Religion* is a *Myſtery* in its own Na"ture; not this or that, or the other

"Reli-

" Religion; but *they are all alike*, all
" is *Myſtery*; and that is but another
" Name for *Fraud* and *Impoſture*. What
" were the *Heathen Myſteries* but tricks
" of *Prieſt-Craft*; and ſuch are main-
" tained and kept up in all kinds of Re-
" ligion. If therefore theſe Men, who
" talk againſt *Myſteries* underſtand
" themſelves, they muſt in purſuance
" of their Principles reject *one God*, as
" well as *three Perſons*; For, as long
" as they believe an Infinite and In-
" comprehenſible Being, it is Nonſenſe
" to reject any other Doctrine, which
" relates to an *Infinite Being*, becauſe
" it is *Incomprehenſible*.

But yet theſe very Men, who ſeem to purſue the Conſequence of this Principle to the utmoſt, muſt aſſert ſomething more incomprehenſible than the *Being of God*. For, I appeal to any Man of common Underſtanding, whether it be not more agreeable to Reaſon to ſuppoſe Works of Skill, Beauty and Order to be the Effects of a wiſe and intelligent Being, than of blind Chance and unaccountable Neceſſity; whether it be not more agreeable to the Senſe of Mankind to ſuppoſe an Infinite and Eternal Mind endued with all poſ-

ſible

ſible Perfections to be the Maker of this viſible World; than, that it ſhould ſtart out from it ſelf, without Contrivance, without Order, without Cauſe? Certainly ſuch Men have no Reaſon to find fault with the *Myſteries of Religion* becauſe they are *incomprehenſible*, ſince there is nothing ſo abſurd and incomprehenſible, as their darling *Hypotheſis*; And, there is nothing which can make it prevail, but to ſuppoſe Mankind to be as dull and inſenſible as the firſt *Chaos*.

Thus I have ſhewn that it is not unreaſonable for *God* to require from us the Belief of ſomething which we cannot comprehend.

(2.) I now come to conſider, whether thoſe who are ſo afraid of *incomprehenſible Myſteries* in our *Faith*, have made it ſo much more eaſie in the Way they have taken. And notwithſtanding all the Hectoring talk againſt *Myſteries* and things incomprehenſible in Religion, I find more inſuperable Difficulties in Point of Reaſon in their Way than in ours. As for Inſtance,

(1.) It is a more reaſonable thing to ſuppoſe ſomething *myſterious* in the Eternal Son of God's *being with the Father*

ther before the World was made by him; (as St. *John* expresses it in the beginning of his Gospel) than in supposing that although *John* the *Baptist* were born six Months before *Jesus Christ*; that yet Christ was in Dignity before him. What a wonderfull *Mystery* is this? Can Men have the Face to cry down *Mysteries* in deep Speculations, and Matters of a high and abstruse Nature, when they make such *Mysteries* of plain and easie things? and suppose the *Evangelist* in profound Language and lofty Expressions to prove a thing, which was never disputed, *viz.* that although *Christ Jesus* were born six Months after *John*, yet he was in Dignity before him? Yet this was a *Mystery*, which, as I remember, *Faustus Socinus* glories in that his Uncle *Lælius* obtained by Revelation.

(2.) It is a more reasonable thing to suppose that a *Divine Person* should assume humane Nature, and so the *Word to be made Flesh*; than to say, that an Attribute of God, his *Wisdom* or *Power* is *made Flesh*, which is a *Mystery* beyond all Comprehension; There may be some Difficulties in our Conception of the other, but this is a thing beyond all Conception or Imagination; For an

Acci-

Accident to be made a *Subſtance* is as abſurd, as to imagine it to *ſubſiſt* without one.

(3.) It is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the Son of God ſhould *come down from Heaven* and take our Nature upon him, than that a Man ſhould be rapt up into Heaven, that it might be ſaid that he came down from thence. For in the former Suppoſition we have many other Places of Scripture to ſupport it, which ſpeak of his *being with God*, and *having Glory with him before the World was*; whereas there is nothing for the other, but only that it is neceſſary to make ſome tolerable Senſe of thoſe words.

(4.) It is more reaſonable to believe that *God* ſhould become *Man* by taking our Nature upon him, than that *Man* ſhould become *God*. For in the former, there is nothing but the Difficulty of conceiving the Manner of the Union, which we all grant to be ſo between Soul and Body; but in the other there is a Repugnancy in the very Conception of a *Created God*, of an *Eternal Son of Adam*, of *Omnipotent Infirmity*, of an *Infinite finite Being*. In the former Caſe, an

an *Infinite* is united to a *Finite*; but in the other a *Finite* becomes *Infinite*.

(5.) It is more reasonable to believe that *Christ Jesus* should suffer as he did *for our sakes* than *for his own*. We are all agreed that the *Sufferings* of *Christ* were far beyond any thing he deserved at *God's* Hands; but what Account then is to be given of them? We say that he made himself a voluntary Sacrifice for Expiation of the Sins of Mankind; and so there was a great and noble End designed, and no Injury done to a willing Mind; and the *Scripture* as plainly expresses this, as it can do in Words. But others deny this, and make him to suffer as one wholly Innocent; for what Cause? To make the most innocent Persons as apprehensive of suffering as the most guilty; and the most righteous God to put no Difference between them, with respect to Suffering?

(6.) It is more reasonable to suppose such a Condescension in the Son of *God* to take upon him the Form of a Servant for our Advantage; than that a *meer Man* should be exalted to the *Honour* and *Worship* which belongs only *to God*. For, on the one side, there is nothing

nothing but what is agreeable to the Divine Nature, viz. *Infinite Love* and *Condeſcenſion* and *Pity* to Mankind; on the other, there is the greateſt Deſign of *Self-exaltation* that ever was in *Humane Nature*, viz. for a *meer Man* to have the moſt *Eſſential Attributes* and *Incommunicable Honour* which belongs to *God*. And whether of theſe two is more agreeable to the Spirit and Deſign of the New Teſtament, let any Man of underſtanding judge. For as it is evident, that the great Intention of it is to magnifie the wonderfull Love of God in the ſending of his Son; ſo it is as plain that one great End of the Chriſtian Doctrine was to take Mankind off from giving Divine Worſhip to Creatures; and can we then ſuppoſe that at the ſame time it ſhould ſet up the *Worſhip* of a *meer Man* with all the *Honour* and *Adoration* which belongs to *God*? This is to me an *incomprehenſible Myſtery* indeed, and far beyond all that is implied in the *Myſteries* of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*. For it ſubverts the very Foundation of the Deſign of Chriſtianity as to the reforming *Idolatry* then in Being; it lays the Foundation for introducing it into the World again; for

ſince the Diſtance between God and his Creatures is taken away, in the Matter of Worſhip, there is nothing left but the Declaration of his Will; which doth not exclude more *Mediators* of *Interceſſion* but upon this Ground, that the *Mediation* of *Redemption* is the Foundation of that of *Interceſſion*. And it is far more eaſie for us to ſuppoſe there may be ſome things too hard for us to underſtand in the Myſtery of our *Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt*, than that at the ſame time it ſhould be both *a Duty* and *a Sin* to worſhip any but the *true God* with proper Divine Worſhip. For if it be Idolatry to give it to a Creature, then it is a great Sin; for ſo the Scripture ſtill accounts it; but if we are bound to give it to Chriſt who is but a Creature, then that which in it ſelf is a Sin, is now become a neceſſary Duty; which overthrows the natural Differences of Good and Evil, and makes *Idolatry* to be a meer *Arbitrary* thing. And I take it for granted, that in Matters of Religion, *Moral* Difficulties are more to be regarded than *Intellectual*; becauſe Religion was far more deſigned for a Rule of our Actions, than for the Satisfaction of our Curioſity.

And

And upon due Examination we ſhall find that there is no ſuch frightfull Appearances of Difficulties in the *Myſtery* of the *Incarnation*, as there is in giving *Divine Worſhip* to a *Creature*.

And it ought to be obſerved, that thoſe very Places which are ſuppoſed to exclude Chriſt from being the *true God*; S. Joh. 17. 3. muſt, if they have any force, exclude him from *Divine Worſhip*. For they are 1 Cor. 6. 6 ſpoken of God as the *Object* of our *Worſhip*; but if he be not excluded from *Divine Worſhip*, then neither is he from being the *true God*; which they grant *Socin.* ad *Eutrop.* p. 96. he is *by Office* but not *by Nature*.

But a *God by Office* who is not ſo *by Nature* is a new and *incomprehenſible Myſtery*. A *Myſtery hidden from Ages and Generations* as to the Church of God; but not *made known by the Goſpel of his Son*. *c. Wick.* c. 11. *Catech. Racov.* p. 65.

This is ſuch a kind of *Myſtery* as the *Heathen* Prieſts had, who had *Gods many and Lords many*, as the *Apoſtle* ſaith, *i. e.* many *by Office* although but one *by Nature*. 1 Cor. 8. 5. But if the Chriſtian Religion had owned *one God by Nature* and only *one by Office*, the Heathens had been to blame chiefly in the Number of their Gods by *Office*, and not in the Divine Worſhip which they gave to them. But

St. *Paul* blames the Heathens for *doing*
Gal. 4. 8. *Service to them which by Nature are no Gods*; not for doing it without Divine Authority, nor for miſtaking the Perſon who was God by Office, but in giving Divine Worſhip to them who *by Nature were no Gods*; which he would never have ſaid, if by the Chriſtian Doctrine, Divine Worſhip were to be given to one who was not *God by Nature.*

But theſe are indeed *incomprehenſible Myſteries* how a Man by Nature can be a God *really* and *truly* by *Office*; how the incommunicable Perfections of the Divine Nature can be communicated to a Creature; how God ſhould *give his Glory to another*, and by his own Command require that to be given to a Creature, which himſelf had abſolutely forbidden to be given to any beſides himſelf. It is ſaid by a famous *Jeſuit* (I will not ſay how agreeably to their own *Doctrines* and *Practices* about Divine Worſhip) *that the Command of God*
Smiglec. de Divin. Verb. Incarn. Nat. p. 45. *cannot make him worthy of Divine Worſhip, who without ſuch a Command is not worthy of it. And it is very abſurd to ſay, that he that is unworthy of it without a Command, can become worthy by it; for*

it

it makes God to command Divine Honour to be given to one who cannot deſerve it. (For no meer Man can deſerve to be made God.) *But it is more agreeable to the Divine Nature and Will not to give his Honour to a Creature.* *Nova Mon-ſtra, &c. p. 42.*

(3.) But after all the Invectives of theſe Enemies to *Myſteries*, we do not make that which we ſay is *Incomprehenſible* to be a *Neceſſary Article of Faith* as it is *Incomprehenſible*; but we do aſſert that what is *Incomprehenſible* as to the *Manner*, may be a *Neceſſary Article* as far as it is plainly revealed. As in the Inſtances I have already mentioned of the *Creation* and *Reſurrection of the Dead*; would they in earneſt have Men turn *Infidels* as to theſe things till they are able to comprehend all the Difficulties which relate to them? If not, why ſhould this ſuggeſtion be allow'd as to the *Myſteries* which relate to our *Redemption* by *Jeſus Chriſt*? If it be ſaid, *the Caſe is not alike for thoſe are clearly revealed and theſe are not*; this brings it to the true and proper Iſſue of this Matter, and if we do not prove a *clear Revelation*, we do not aſſert their being *Neceſſary Articles of Faith*; but my preſent buſineſs was

only to take off this Objection that the *Myſteries* were incomprehenſible and therefore not to be received by us.

II. And ſo I come to the ſecond Way, by which, we are to examine the ſeveral Senſes of *Chriſt Jeſus coming to ſave Sinners:* Which of them tends more to the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind; or which is *more worthy of all Acceptation.*

And that will appear by conſidering theſe things;

(1.) Which tends moſt to the raiſing our *Eſteem* and *Love* of *Chriſt Jeſus.*

(2.) Which tends moſt to the begetting in us a greater *Hatred of Sin.*

(3.) Which tends moſt to the ſtrengthening our *Hope* of *Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt.*

(1.) As to the raiſing in us a greater *Eſteem* and *Love of Chriſt.* We are certain that the Infinite Love and Condeſcenſion of *Chriſt Jeſus* in undertaking ſuch a Work as *the ſaving of Sinners* makes it moſt worthy of all Acceptation.

tion. Some Men may pleaſe themſelves in thinking that by taking away all *Myſteries* they have made their *Faith* more eaſie, but I am certain they have extremely leſſen'd the Argument for our *Love*, *viz.* the Apprehenſions of the wonderfull Love and Condeſcenſion of Chriſt in coming into the World *to ſave Sinners*. And yet this is the great Argument of the New Teſtament to perſwade Mankind to the *Love of God* and of his Son: *God ſo loved the World that* Joh. 3. 16. *he gave his only begotten Son*, &c. This is indeed a mighty Argument of Love, if by *the only begotten Son* be meant the Eternal Son of God, *who came down from Heaven*, as St. *John* ſpeaks juſt be- v. 13. fore; but if no more be meant but only that God made a *meer Man* to be his Son, and after he had preached a while here on Earth and was ill uſed and crucified by his own People, he exalted him to be *God* and gave him Divine Attributes and Honours; this were an Argument of great Love to the Perſon of Chriſt, but not to the reſt of Mankind. But *God's Love* in *Scripture* is magnified with reſpect to *the World* in the ſending of his Son. *In this was ma-* 1 Joh. 4. 9. *nifeſted*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *the Love of*

God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World that we
v. 10. *ſhould live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins.* The great Love we ſtill ſee is *towards us*, i. e. towards Mankind, but according to the other Senſe it muſt have been, herein was the Love of God manifeſted to his Son, that for his Sufferings he exalted him above all Crea-
Rom. 8. 32. tures. *He that ſpared not his own Son*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *but deliver'd him up for us all.* If he were the *Eternal Son of God* who came to ſuffer for us, there is a mighty Force and *Emphaſis* in this Expreſſion, and very apt to raiſe our Admiration and our Love; but what *not ſparing his own Son* is there, if nothing were meant but that he deſigned by Sufferings to exalt him? For *not ſparing him* ſuppoſes an Antecedent Relation of the higheſt Kindneſs, but the other is only deſigning extraordinary Kindneſs for the ſake of his Sufferings. Therefore, the Argument for the *Love* of *God* is taken from what his *Son* was, when he deliver'd him up for us all; he was his *own Son*; not by *Adoption* as
John 1. 14. ch. 3. v. 16. others are; St *John* calls him his *only begotten*

begotten Son; and God himſelf, *his beloved Son* in the Voice from Heaven; and this before his Sufferings, immediately after his Baptiſm, when as yet, there was nothing extraordinary done by him, as to the great Deſign of his coming. Which ſhews, that there was an Antecedent Relation between him and the Father; and that therein the Love of God and of Chriſt was manifeſted, that being the *only begotten Son of the Father*, he ſhould take our Nature upon him, and for our ſakes do and ſuffer what he did. This is indeed an Argument great enough to raiſe our Admiration, to excite our Devotion, to inflame our Affections; but how flat and low doth it appear, when it comes to no more than this, that there was a *Man*, whom, after his Sufferings, *God* raiſed from the Dead and made him a *God by Office*? Doth this carry any ſuch Argument in it for our Eſteem and Love and Devotion to him as the other doth upon the moſt ſerious Conſideration of it? Luk. 3.22.

(2.) Which tends moſt to beget in us a greater *Hatred of Sin*. For that is ſo contrary to the Way of our *Salvation* by *Jeſus Chriſt*, that what tends moſt

moſt to our *Hatred* of it, muſt conduce moſt to our Happineſs; and therefore be *moſt worthy of all Acceptation.* It is agreed on all hands, that *Chriſt* did ſuffer very much both in his Mind and in his Body. In his Mind, when it is
Joh. 13. 21. ſaid, *that he was troubled in Spirit*; that
Matth. 26. 37, 38. *he began to be ſorrowfull and very heavy*; and ſoon after, *My Soul is exceeding*
Mark 14. 33, 34. *ſorrowfull, even unto death.* St. *Luke* ſaith, *that he was in an Agony*; where-
Luke 22. 44. in he not only *prayed more earneſtly, but his ſweat was as it were great Drops of Blood falling to the Ground.* What made this Amazement, and dreadfull Agony in the Mind of the moſt innocent Perſon in the World? Was it merely the Fear of the Pains of Death which he was to undergo? That is impoſſible, conſidering the Aſſurance which he had of ſo glorious a Reward ſo ſoon following after; when ſo many Martyrs endured ſuch exquiſite Torments for his ſake without any ſuch Diſturbance or Conſternation. But the Apoſtles give
1 Pet. 2. 24. us another Account of it. St. *Peter*, ſaith he was *to bear our Sins in his own*
3. 18. *body on the tree*; that *Chriſt ſuffer'd for*
2 Cor 5. 21. *Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt.* St. *Paul*, *that God made him to be Sin for us who knew*

knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him. Hereby we underſtand how ſo innocent a Perſon came to ſuffer; *he ſtood in our ſtead; he was made Sin for us*; and therefore was to be treated as a Sinner; and to ſuffer that on our Account, which he could not deſerve on his own. If he ſuffer'd on his own Account, this were the way to fill our Minds with perplexity concerning the Juſtice of Providence with reſpect to his dealings with the moſt innocent and holy Perſons in this World; if he ſuffer'd on our Account, then we have the Benefit of his Sufferings, and therein we ſee how diſpleaſing to God ſin is, when even his own Son ſuffer'd ſo much by taking the guilt of our Sins upon him. And what can tend more to the begetting in us a due hatred of ſin, than to conſider, what *Chriſt* himſelf ſuffer'd on the Account of it? What can make us have more dreadfull thoughts of it, than that the great and mercifull God, when he deſigned *to ſave Sinners*, yet would have his own Son to become *a Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind?* And unleſs we allow this, we muſt put force upon the plaineſt Expreſſions of *Scripture*; and make

make *Chriſt* to ſuffer meerly to ſhew God's Power over a moſt innocent Perſon, and his Will and Pleaſure to inflict the moſt ſevere Puniſhment without any Reſpect to Guilt. And ſurely ſuch a Notion of *God*, cannot be *worthy of all Acceptation*.

(3.) Which tends moſt to ſtrengthen our *Hope* of *Salvation by Chriſt Jeſus*. If we believe that he ſuffer'd for our Sins, then we have great Reaſon to hope for the Forgiveneſs of them; although they have been many and great, if we ſincerely repent; becauſe the moſt prevailing Argument for Deſpair will be removed; which is taken from the *Juſtice of God*, and his declared *Hatred* of *Sin* and *Diſpleaſure* againſt *Sinners*. If God be ſo much in earneſt diſpleaſed with the Sins of Mankind, and his Juſtice be concerned in the Puniſhment of Sinners, how can they ever hope to eſcape, unleſs there be a way for his Diſpleaſure to be removed, and his Juſtice to be ſatisfied? And this the *Scripture* tells us is done by *Chriſt*, who
Rom. 5 10. 1 Cor. 5. 19. Heb. 9. 15. died that he might be a *Sacrifice of Atonement* to *reconcile us to God by his Death*; as St. *Paul* expreſly affirms. And by this means, we may have ſtrong

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Conſolation from the Hopes of Forgiveneſs of our Sins. Whereas, if this be taken away, either Men muſt believe that *God* was not in earneſt diſpleaſed with the Sins of Mankind; which muſt exceedingly leſſen our Eſteem of the *Holineſs* and *Juſtice of God*; or if he were ſo diſpleaſed, that he laid aſide this Diſpleaſure, without any *Atonement* or *Sacrifice* of *Expiation*. And ſo, as many as look on *God's Juſtice* and *Holineſs* as neceſſary and eſſential Attributes of God, will be in danger of ſinking into the Depths of Deſpair, as often as they reflect ſeriouſly on the Guilt of their Sins. But on the other ſide, if we believe that while we were *Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*; then we may *have Peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and have Reaſon to believe that there will be *no Condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus* by a lively Faith and ſincere Repentance; then they may with Comfort look up to God as a reconciled Father, through *Jeſus Chriſt our Mediatour*; then they may with inward Satisfaction look beyond the Grave, and ſtedfaſtly hope for that Salvation which Chriſt purchaſed on Earth

and

and will at laſt beſtow on all ſuch as love and obey him. To which God of his Infinite Mercy bring us all through *Jeſus Chriſt*. For, *This is a faithfull Saying and worthy of all Acceptation, that he came into the World to ſave Sinners.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March the 1*ſt.* 169⅞.

S. Luke VI. 46.

And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay?

THeſe few Words contain in them a ſmart and ſerious *Expoſtulation* of our Bleſſed Saviour, with ſuch who profeſſed great Kindneſs to him in their Words, but ſhew'd no Regard to his Commands. They owned him to be the *Meſſias*, and depended upon him for their Happineſs, and were willing enough

enough to be known to be his Diſciples and Followers, but yet his Doctrine made little Impreſſion on their Minds, and ſcarce any Alteration in the Courſe of their Lives. They loved to be where Chriſt was, to hear his Doctrine, to ſee his Miracles, to obſerve his Converſation, to admire what he did and ſaid; but herein lay the whole of their Religion; for although they *named the name of Chriſt*, and it may be rejoyced and glory'd in it, yet *they did not depart from iniquity*. Now, conſidering the Circumſtances of that time, this ſeems to have been an unaccountable kind of Hypocriſie. For their calling Chriſt *Lord, Lord*, ſpoiled their Intereſt in this World; and *not doing what he ſaid*, debarr'd them from the hopes of Happineſs by him in another. For, if they own'd him to be their *Lord*, they were bound to believe him in what he declared; and there is nothing he doth more expreſly warn men of, than hoping to be ſaved by him without obeying his Commands. *Not every one* Matt. 7. 21. *that ſaith unto me Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Which is ſhorter expreſſed,

but

but to the ſame purpoſe here by S. *Luke*; *And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay?* As though he had ſaid to them, "It "is in vain to think to pleaſe and flat-"ter me with your Words, when your "Actions are diſagreeable to them. "To call me *Lord, Lord*, is to own "my *Authority* in commanding you; "but to do this, and yet wilfully to "diſobey me, is to ſhew your Hypo-"criſie and Folly together.

Which *Expoſtulation* of Chriſt was not confined to that time, no more than his Commands were; but it hath always the ſame Force, where Perſons are guilty of the ſame Folly. For although now none can plead for themſelves, as they did, *We have eaten and drank in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets*; yet we may build as preſumptuous hopes upon Privileges of another kind, which may be as ineffectual to our Salvation, as theſe were when Chriſt ſaid to thoſe very Perſons, *Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*. We all bear the Name of Chriſt, and own his Doctrine, and partake of his Sacraments; and in one of them profeſs *to eat and drink in his Pre-*

Luke 13. 26.

v. 27.

ſence, and at his Table, and renew our ſolemn Baptiſmal Vow and Covenant with him as our Lord and Saviour; and ſo we pray to him and profeſs to depend upon him for our Salvation; and therefore we are as deeply concerned in the Scope and Deſign of theſe Words, as ever the *Jews* were to whom our Saviour ſpake them.

But that I may the better Apply them to the Conſciences of all thoſe who hear me this Day, and to make my Diſcourſe more uſefull and Practical, I ſhall ſingle out ſome of the moſt Remarkable Inſtances of thoſe Duties, which Chriſt hath enjoyned to his Diſciples of all Ages and Nations; and then ſhew how juſt and reaſonable it is that all who call Chriſt *Lord, Lord*, ſhould *do what he ſaith* about them; and yet that the Generality of thoſe who do ſo, do very little Mind or Regard them.

The main part of thoſe Duties which Chriſt requires from all his Diſciples may be reduced to theſe three Heads:

I. Such as relate to the *Government of our Paſſions.*

II. To the *Government of our Speech.*

III. To

III. To the *Government of our Actions*; ſo, as that we lead a *Sober, Righteous and Godly Life.*

I. As to the *Government of our Paſſions.* And that may be conſidered three ways.

1. As to the things which are apt to *Provoke* us.
2. As to the things which are apt to *Tempt* us.
3. As to the things which *Concern* us, in reſpect of our Condition in this World.

(1.) As to the things which are apt to *Provoke* us. Such is the frame of human Nature, that we are very tender and ſenſible not only of any real Hurt or Injury which may be done to our Bodies or Eſtates, but of any thing we apprehend may do ſo, or that touches upon our Reputation. And where the Injury is real, yet that which often touches moſt to the quick, is the *Contempt* which is expreſſed in it. For, if the ſame thing be done by one, we are ſatisfied did it not out of any Unkindneſs or Ill-will, the matter is eaſily paſſed over, and makes no breach or difference between them. But, if it be

intended for an Affront, although it be never ſo little, then the briſker mens Spirits are, and the higher Opinion they have of themſelves, ſo much deeper Impreſſion is preſently made in the Mind; and that inflames the Heart and puts the Blood and Spirits into a quicker Motion in order to the returning the Affront on him that gave it. But there is a conſiderable difference in Mens Tempers to be obſerved; ſome are very quick and haſty, others are ſlower in the beginning, but more violent afterwards; the Paſſions of the former are like a Flaſh of Gun-powder, which begins ſuddenly, makes a great Noiſe and is ſoon over; but the other are like a burning Fever, which is lower at firſt, but riſes by degrees, till the whole Body be in a Flame. The one is more troubleſome, but the other more dangerous; the Care of the one muſt be in the beginning; of the other in the Continuance of Paſſion, leſt it turn into Hatred, Malice and Revenge. But what through the Natural Heat of Temper in ſome, the Jealouſie and Suſpicion in others, the croſſing each others Deſigns and Inclinations, the miſconſtruction of Words and Actions, the

the Careleſneſs of ſome and the Frowardneſs and Peeviſhneſs of others, Mankind are apt to lead very uneaſie Lives with reſpect to one another; and muſt do ſo unleſs they look after the Government of themſelves as to real or imaginary Provocations.

There are two Things I ſhall therefore ſpeak to,

(1.) That it is Reaſonable that a Reſtraint ſhould be laid on Mens violent Paſſions.

(2.) That Chriſt hath laid no unreaſonable reſtraint upon them.

(1.) That it is Reaſonable that a Reſtraint ſhould be laid on mens violent Paſſions. And that on a twofold Account.

(1.) With Reſpect to the common Tranquility of humane Life.

(2.) To the particular Tranquility of our own Minds.

(1.) To the common Tranquility of human Life. The great Comfort and Pleaſure of it depends on the mutual benefit Men have from Society with one another. This cannot be enjoy'd without particular Perſons abridging themſelves of ſome natural Rights for a common Benefit. If we could

ſuppoſe no ſuch thing as Government or Society among men, we muſt ſuppoſe nothing but Diſorder and Confuſion; every one being his own Judge and Executioner too in caſe of any apprehended Wrong or Injury done to him. Which condition of Life having all imaginable Uneaſineſs attending it, by perpetual Fears and Jealouſies and Miſtruſts of one anothers Powers, there was a Neceſſity that they muſt come to ſome common Terms of Agreement with each other; ſo as to fix their Rights and to eſtabliſh a juſt Meaſure of Proceeding in caſe of Wrong. For every Man's Revenging his own Injury according to his own Judgment, was one of thoſe great Inconveniencies, which was to be remedied by Society, Laws and Government. And Mankinds entering into Society for this End, doth ſuppoſe it poſſible for them to keep under their violent Paſſions; and to ſubmit their private Injuries to the equal Arbitration of Laws; or elſe they are made to no purpoſe, unleſs it be to puniſh men for what they cannot avoid. For many of thoſe Crimes which all the Laws of Mankind do puniſh, as wilfull Murder, may be committed through the

the force of a violent Paſſion; and if that be irreſiſtible, then the Laws which puniſh it are not founded on Reaſon and Juſtice. But if ſuch Laws are very Juſt and Reaſonable, as no doubt they are, then all Mankind are agreed that mens violent Paſſions may and ought to be Reſtrained in ſome Caſes. The only Diſpute then remaining is, whether it may not be as fitting to reſtrain our Paſſions in ſuch Caſes, which the Law takes no notice of. For, there is a Superiour Law, *viz.* that of Reaſon whereby we are to be Governed; and the Publick Laws do not forbid or puniſh Offences becauſe they are unreaſonable, but becauſe they are dangerous and hurtfull to human Society. And And if it be allow'd to be fitting and neceſſary for men to keep their Paſſions within the Compaſs of Laws, why not within the Conduct of Reaſon? Eſpecially, when a great deal of Diſorder may happen, and diſturbance of the Peace and Quiet of human Society, by the Violence of Paſſions, which may be out of the Reach of human Laws. And every man is bound by virtue of his being in Society, to preſerve the Tranquility of it as much as he can.

(2.) The Tranquility of our own Minds depends upon it. And certainly, that is a very reasonable Motive for the Government of our Passions, since those are the Occasions of all the Storms and Tempests within our Breasts. For the Government of Reason is calm, even and serene, full of Peace and all the Blessings which follow it; but the Government of Passion is tyrannical and boisterous, uncertain and troublesome; never free from doing Mischief to it self or others. The greatest Pleasure of Passion is Revenge; and yet that is so unnatural, so full of anxiety and fear of the Consequents of it, that he who can subdue this unruly Passion hath more real Pleasure and Satisfaction in his mind, than he who seeks to gratifie it most. For, if he be disappointed, then he must be uneasie by failing of his end; if he be not, then he is tormented with the Apprehensions of what may follow it. So that there is nothing which conduces more to the greatest Blessing of Life, the Tranquility of our Minds, than the Government of our Passions doth.

(2.) Let us now see, whether our Saviour hath laid any Unreasonable Restraint upon our Passions. There

There are Three things he particularly requires in order to the Government of them.

(1.) *Meekneſs.* (2.) *Patience.* (3.) *Love of Enemies.* And I hope to make it appear, that there is nothing unreaſonable in any of theſe.

(1.) *Meekneſs.* Which is ſuch a Gentleneſs of Temper, as makes a man not eaſie to be provoked. There is a great deal of difference between *Meekneſs* and *Stupidity*; the one ariſes from a natural Dulneſs and Inſenſibility; the other from a fixed, calm and compoſed Temper of Mind; and is founded on two, which are both wiſe things, eſpecially when they go together; and thoſe are, *Conſideration* and *Reſolution.* For, nothing tends to the abating the heat and violence of Paſſion ſo much, as *Conſideration* doth, and *Reſolution* makes it effectual. If it were nothing but the time it gives, that is of great force for letting out the inward Fermentation, which will ſpend it ſelf in great meaſure, if Vent be given to it. Whereas, if it be kept in and ſuffer'd to work upon it ſelf, it turns from a haſty Paſſion to Malice and Revenge. But *Conſideration* is of greater Uſe, as it ſuggeſts

geſts Arguments from Reaſon to quell and allay the ſudden heat of Paſſions; as, That, it expoſes the Weakneſs of our Minds, in not being able to keep under that which they ought to Govern and have Power to Command; That, it is a great Folly to diſorder our ſelves, at the Pleaſure of our Enemies; or, at ſuch Accidents, which we can neither prevent, nor remove; That, the wiſeſt thing we can do, is not to betray our Folly to others, if we cannot wholly ſuppreſs it in our ſelves; That, we weaken the Reins of the Government of our ſelves, by not holding them with a ſtricter hand; and make our Paſſions more ſeditious and turbulent by letting them alone; That, the more we try to command our ſelves the eaſier we ſhall do it; That our moſt rebellious Paſſions will ſubmit, if they find we are in earneſt; That it is the way to make that a real Injury by being diſturbed, which would loſe its force by being neglected; That, while we are true to our ſelves, we are out of the reach of our Enemies, and then we are moſt under their Power, when we are leaſt under our own; That, the great work of Religion lies within us; and that we

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are in a very ill condition if neither Reaſon no Religion can keep us in order. By ſuch *Conſiderations* as theſe, men are brought to a more calm and compoſed Temper, which is that *Meekneſs* which our Saviour requires. And to this he ſeems to appropriate the Happineſs of this Life. *Bleſſed are the Meek for they ſhall inherit the earth.* Matt. 5. 5. What doth our Bleſſed Saviour mean by *Inheriting the Earth*? Is there any thing like *Bleſſedneſs* to be expected in this troubleſome and ſinfull World? Not Abſolutely; but Comparatively there may; and if there be any thing like it to be had here, the *meek* may put in for the largeſt ſhare of it. For they have more Friends and fewer Enemies than the reſt of the World; they enjoy themſelves with more quietneſs and ſatisfaction, and are leſs diſturbed at the Noiſe and tumultuous Paſſions of the reſt of mankind. O happy Temper! To be calm and eaſie in good humour, in the midſt of Diſorders and Provocations; To enjoy the Peace and Serenity of the Regions above, in the midſt of the Storms and Tempeſts here below; To raiſe the Mind above the power of Detraction; and thereby to

ſuffer

ſuffer the Venom of malicious Tongues to ſcatter and diſperſe it ſelf in the open Air, if it doth not return to the Breaſts of thoſe from whom it came. S. *James* might therefore well call it the *Meekneſs of Wiſdom*, not only becauſe Wiſdom directs it, but that it conſiſts very much in the Exerciſe of it.

James 3. 13.

2. *Patience.* For let Perſons be endued with the *Spirit of Meekneſs*, yet the World is ſo froward and hard to be pleaſed, ſo captious and ill-natured, ſo ready to apprehend an Injury and to revenge it, that there is great need of *Patience*, not only in *bearing* the Troubles of Life, but in *forbearing* to return *evil for evil.* And this is that which our Saviour particularly requires of his Diſciples. He ſtrictly forbids all *Cauſeleſs Anger*, all *Contumelious* and *Reproachfull Words*; and when Injuries are done us, he commands us *that we reſiſt not evil; but if one ſmite us on the right Cheek, to turn to him the other alſo. And if any man will ſue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alſo. And whoſoever will compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.* Now here lies a real Difficulty; for this ſeems to go beyond the bounds

Matth. 5. 22.

v. 39.

v. 40.

v. 41.

bounds of humane Patience: To paſs by Affronts without taking notice of them; not to reſent the Injuries of thoſe whom no Kindneſs can oblige, ſeems to be a great degree of Vertue; and it is ſo; but to bind hand and foot when we receive them, to invite them to do more, and to offer our ſelves to double the proportion, ſeems wholly unaccountable to Reaſon, and inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of *Chriſtianity*.

The true Account of the meaning of theſe Commands is this; Our Saviour takes it for granted, that all conſiderable matters of Right and Wrong were determin'd by Laws; as the moſt equal Meaſures between Parties; and theſe he meddled not with; For, ſaith he, to one that deſired him to interpoſe in ſuch a matter; *Who made me a Judge or a Divider among you?* Therefore he doth not abridge his Followers from making uſe of theſe Laws and Courts of Judicature, which are eſtabliſhed for matters of common Juſtice and Equity; but all the Laws in the World cannot alter the Temper of ſome mens minds, who are peeviſh and quarrelſome, who are provoked on any ſlight Occaſion, and it may be are provoked if you gave them Luke 12. 14.

them none. Like the *Roman* Orator, *Seneca* mentions, who was angry with every one that came near him; and when a Client sought to humour him in every thing, he was at last angry with him, because he did not provoke him. There are some Tempers so easily provoked, and yet so hard to be reconciled, as if their Original Sin did not lie in *Concupiscence* but in *Ill-nature*. And yet, even that is a kind of *Concupiscence*; for the *Stoicks* defined Anger by *Libido*; and said it was a *Lust of Revenge*; and so far, seem'd more unreasonable than that of *Intemperance*; because this aims only at Pleasure, in things which are apt to produce it, (however mean and unreasonable) but the other is an extravagant and unnatural Pleasure, which arises from anothers Pain; and differs from the other, as the Pleasures of evil Spirits do from those of Brutes.

De Irâ, l. 3. c. 8.

Tusc. 3. 9.

But if we happen to converse among such who take Pleasure in doing us Injuries upon every slight Occasion, by some personal Affronts, or litigious Suits, or unjust Exactions in ordinary Cases; what are we to do? May we not right our selves by retaliating the

Injury

Injury upon them? Since the Law of *Moſes* did allow of *Retaliation* in caſe of real Injuries, *an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth*; and ſo by an equitable Conſtruction of the Law, it may extend to perſonal Affronts. Thus the *Jews* indeed underſtood it; but if our *Saviour* had allow'd their Interpretation, he would never have ſaid, *But I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not evil.* There was a *Spirit* of *Revenge* in them, ſo as they would paſs by no kind of Injuries, although they were ſuch, which the Law had made no proviſion for; and this our Saviour condemns. But here comes a hard Caſe to be reſolv'd; not ſo in it ſelf, but the Cuſtom of the World hath made it ſo; for when a miſtaken Notion of *Honour* and *Conſcience* come in Competition, it is not an eaſie thing to forgo *Honour* for *Conſcience* ſake. The Caſe is, concerning *Contumelious Words* and *Perſonal Affronts*, which are given to Men of Honour. Is it unlawfull for them to right themſelves according to the receiv'd Cuſtoms among them, when the Law takes no notice of ſuch Injuries, and ſo ſeems to leave it to them? This is the Caſe; and I have put it as fair as the thing will bear.

Exod. 21. 24. Levit. 24. 20. Deut. 19. 21.

I might

I might ſay in general that our *Saviour* makes no diſtinction of Mens Honour and Quality in his Commands; and that for all that I can ſee, ſuch muſt be ſaved on the ſame Terms with others; That *Honour* is but an imaginary thing when it ſtands in Competition with the Rule of *Conſcience*; and that no Cuſtom is to be obſerved againſt *Reaſon* and *Religion:* But here lies the inſuperable Difficulty; how the expoſing one anothers Lives for the ſake of *Reproachfull Words* or *Perſonal Affronts*, can be reconciled to this Command of Chriſt? For my part, I cannot ſee how it is poſſible to do it; ſince in this Caſe, there is a ſtudied and premeditated Deſign of Revenge in the Caſe of ſuch Injuries which are here mention'd; and that of the higheſt Nature, and beyond any Proportion between the Offence and the Puniſhment, which all men out of Paſſion, think, in common Juſtice ought to be conſider'd. I know ſome Caſuiſts in the *Church of Rome*, allow it to be lawfull to take away the Lives of any who give them *Contumelious Words*; but theſe have been condemned as very looſe *Caſuiſts*; and they have found out a ſubtle way of *directing the Intention*,

Intention, whereby to keep from breaking the Laws of Chriſt; but this is too ſubtle to be reconciled with the Plainneſs of his Laws; and they all deny it to be lawfull by way of Revenge. Others ſay much better, that although *Nature* may ſeem to give an injured Perſon a Right to vindicate himſelf by the beſt means he can; yet that Right is ſo reſtrained and limited by Chriſt's Commands in this caſe, that it is by no means lawful for *Chriſtians* to uſe it; and to pretend to do it for a Reparation of Honour, *à ratione & pietate valdè alienam videtur*, *is repugnant both to Reaſon and Religion*; ſaith one, who very well underſtood the Rules of both. Gr. de J. B. & P. l. 2. l. 10.

But all the pretended *Right* of *Nature* is taken away by *Laws*, and where thoſe declare it to be *Wilfull Murder* to take away the Life of another on ſuch Accounts as theſe, there is no colour left for natural Right, which ſuppoſes no determination by Laws.

I confeſs it requires a more than ordinary Degree of *Chriſtian Fortitude* as well as *Patience*, to be able to deſpiſe ſuch a prevailing Cuſtom. But if Men hope to be ſaved by Chriſt, they muſt obſerve his Commands; and if they

once declare, that they are resolved to do so in this particular, (if they do the same in all others) it will be then thought to be Conscience and not Cowardice for them to decline a Challenge; and that upon good Grounds they decline such a Custom, which no good man could ever approve, nor any wise man defend.

3. *Love of Enemies.* This seems to be harder yet. Is it not enough to bear them; but must we love them too? Yes, Christ hath strictly required it.

Luk. 6. 27, 35. *But I say unto you, Love your Enemies*; and again in this very Chapter, *But love your Enemies.* If he had bid Men love their Friends and take heed of their Enemies, there are some Ages of the World, wherein this had been no impertinent Advice. But how can those be supposed to love their Enemies, who hardly love any thing but themselves? Self-Opinion, Self-Will, Self-Interest prevail over the far-greatest part of Mankind; I wish I could not say, even among those who call Christ *Lord, Lord.* But Self-Love as natural as it is, must be artificially disguised; for, if it appears too openly, it meets with so much Self-Love in others, that it will not

not be eaſily born. Therefore the moſt craſty Lovers of themſelves, if they deſign to have the Love of others, muſt conceal their inward Paſſion. For, he that appears to ſet up himſelf, is certain to make the reſt of Mankind his Enemies; for, even thoſe who would do the ſame, will be the moſt diſpleaſed with thoſe who do it. Therefore the moſt certain way to Honour and univerſal Eſteem, is to mind the Good of others more than our own; to be Juſt and Charitable and Kind to all; and to oblige as many as we can, without Partiality or Prejudice. And this, I ſay, is that *Love of Enemies* which our Saviour requires, which doth not ſuppoſe the ſame kind of Affection to them which we have to our Friends, for that is grounded an mutual Love and Good-will to each other; which, if we ſuppoſe in Enemies, we ſuppoſe a Contradiction; for that is to ſuppoſe them not to be Enemies, but Friends. What then is it which our Saviour means? It is certainly an Univerſal Charity, or a Readineſs of Mind *to do good* to all, although they have perſonally provoked, or injured us. And ſo Chriſt himſelf explains it, by doing good to our Ene- Luk. 6. 27. 33-35.

mies, praying for them and relieving them in their Neceſſities; and he propoſes the beſt Example in the World for our imitation; and that of God himſelf, *who maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.* But none can ſuppoſe that the righteous and holy God, can have the ſame Love or Kindneſs for the Evil, which he hath for the Good, or for the Unjuſt, which he hath for the Juſt. So that this Precept, which being miſunderſtood, ſeems to be irreconcilable to human Nature, contains in it, nothing but what all Mankind approve in others, as unwilling as they are to practiſe it themſelves.

And now it is time to make a ſtand, and to look about us, for, I have gone through our Saviour's Commands with reſpect to the things which are apt to *provoke* us. And where are thoſe *Chriſtians* to be found, who do what Chriſt hath ſaid herein, who do yet every day call him *Lord, Lord?* If Peeviſhneſs and Frowardneſs, perpetual Uneaſineſs and Diſcontent; if Rancor and Bitterneſs, Strife and Envying, Faction and Animoſity; if Impatience of apprehended Injuries, and the making of Enemies,

nemies, inſtead of *loving them*, were the Marks of good Chriſtians, we ſhould find Number enough, even among thoſe who pretend to Reformation. We profeſs to thank God for a late great Deliverance from the hands of our *Enemies*, I mean as to our *Religion*; (and truly there appears more and more Reaſon for it, ſince it is ſo much more evident that the Deſign was no leſs than a total Subverſion of our Religion.)

But what a ſad Requital is this, for ſo great Mercies, to break out into *Factions* and *Parties*, inſtead of purſuing the common Intereſt of our Religion; Inſtead of laying aſide Differences about Religion, to increaſe them; nay to make Religion it ſelf not only the Subject of their Quarrels, but of their Scorn and Contempt? What can be ſaid or hoped for, as to ſuch a froward, unthankful, atheiſtical Generation of Men? Thanks be to God, there are not wanting ſome extraordinary Examples of true *Piety* and *Goodneſs* among us; and of *Meekneſs*, *Patience* and *Univerſal Charity*; and truly there needs a great deal, to bear up againſt the daring and inſolent *Profaneneſs* and *Irreligion* of others. When I once ſee a true

Spirit of Reformation prevail among us, not meerly as to Doctrines, but as to Mens Lives and Tempers; when I see them more zealous for God and Religion, than for the Interest of particular Parties; when I see them really promoting Peace and Unity, and not making a Pretence of it to serve private Ends, I may then hope for a lasting Settlement of the true Religion among us. But till then——

(2.) I proceed to the second Head of our Saviour's Commands, and that is as to such things which *Tempt* us. S. *James* Jam. 1. 14. saith, *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own Lust and inticed. Lust* is the ungoverned Desire of Sensual Pleasure. Now, as to this, Christ hath laid so strict a Command, as seems very hard for humane Nature to observe. For he not only forbids the Act of *Adultery*, but the Tendencies to it; *viz.* the *Impurity* of the inward *Desires*, and of *Looks* and *Glances*, and makes these Matt. 5. 28. to be *Adultery in the Heart*. What is that; For *Adultery* is an outward deliberate Act, and hath *Injustice* as well as *Uncleanness* in it. But *Desires* and *Looks*, are sudden and transient things, which may leave no permanent Effect behind

behind them. However, our Saviour, to ſhew how much God abhors *Impurity*, (who ſees into the ſecret Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart,) declares that the unmortified Deſires and inward Luſts are very diſpleaſing to God; and therefore that thoſe who hope to ſee God, muſt be *Pure in Heart.* Which as it implies a ſincere Endeavour to ſuppreſs all inward Motions which are contrary to it, is both a reaſonable and neceſſary Duty. Matt. 5. 8.

But the hardeſt part of Chriſt's Commands in this matter, is that which requires us *to pluck out our right eyes, and to cut off right hands:* Muſt the blind and the lame only go to Heaven? But he ſpeaks of ſuch ſinfull Inclinations in us, which ſeem as delightfull and uſefull to us as to the Pleaſures of Life, as *a right Eye* or *a right Hand*; yet we muſt part with them, if we ever hope to get to Heaven. Not, by any one ſingle Act like *the cutting off a Hand*, or *plucking out an Eye*, but by a ſerious, conſtant and ſincere Endeavour to mortifie and ſubdue them. And if this be thought hard, the Conſideration of future Happineſs and Miſery ought to reconcile us to it; and ſurely it is reaſonable we ſhould part Matt. 5. 29, 30.

with ſomething which is pleaſant to us here, for the ſake of an infinitely greater Pleaſure in another World; ſince this is only a ſenſual Pleaſure, which cannot be purſued without diſturbance of the Mind, and can be enjoy'd but for a little time; and the other is no leſs than Eternal Felicity of Soul and Body together.

(3.) As to the things which *Concern* us, as to our Condition in this World. There is no Precept of Chriſt which ſeems more inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of this World, than this doth. For, as that lies in taking great care for the future; ſo our Saviour on the contrary ſeems to allow none at all. *Therefore I*

Matt. 6. 25. *ſay unto you, Take no thought for your Life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall*

Luk. 12. 22. *drink, nor yet, for your Body, what ye ſhall put on.* What doth our Saviour mean by this? Would he have all Chriſtians live like the *young Ravens*, meerly upon Providence? Or, as the *Lilies* of the Field, which grow and flouriſh and yet neither Toil nor Spin? But Man is an intelligent Creature, and apt to forecaſt and contrive things for his future advantage, and God ſeems to have left things very much to his own Care

Luk. 12. 24. Job 38. 41. Pſal. 147. 9.

and

and Providence; and generally ſpeaking, Mens Condition in this World is according to it. What then; Doth our Saviour indulge Men in a careleſs, eaſie, unthinking Life? Or, require that his Diſciples thoughts ought to be wholly taken up with matters of Religion? Not, if S. *Paul* knew his meaning; for he ſaith, *Thoſe who provide not for their own, have denied the Faith and are worſe than Infidels.* But this only ſeems to make the Difficulty greater. Therefore to clear it, we muſt attend to our Saviour's Scope and Deſign; which was, to perſwade his Diſciples *to lay up their Treaſure in Heaven, to ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs in the firſt place*; and then repreſents this World and another as two oppoſite Intereſts, ſo that *one cannot ſerve two Maſters*; which implies a Contradiction to each other. So that what follows muſt be underſtood in ſuch a Senſe, as is inconſiſtent with the main Duty, of looking after Heaven as our Happineſs; and therefore ought not to be underſtood of a prudent, neceſſary Care, but of an anxious, ſolicitous, diſtruſtfull Care, which implies that we place our Happineſs too much here. And therefore S. *Luke* ſub- 1 Tim. 5. 8.

joyns

joyns these Commands to the Parable
Luk. 12. of the Rich Man, whose heart was in
18, 19. his Barns and Store-houses, and took great care to lay in Provision enough for a sensual and voluptuous Life: But to shew the unspeakable Folly of such vain Contrivances, it was said to him,
v. 20. *This night shall thy Soul be required of thee; and then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?*

II. I come now to our Saviour's Commands with respect to the *Government of our Speech.* And he seems to be very
Matt. 12. severe as to this, when he saith, *That*
36. *every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the Day of Judgment.* What a heavy Account then, are those to make, whose time is so much taken up with idle and impertinent talk; and who can hardly forbear it, when they should be most serious? Is it unlawfull then to speak any more than is just necessary to express our Minds? May we not imploy our Speech sometimes for our innocent Diversion and Entertainment if we keep within the bounds of Prudence and Religion? I do not see that our Saviour forbids it. For the *idle Words* he speaks of there,

are

are profane, falſe, abuſive, malicious Reproaches of Religion and the means to confirm it; as appears by his bringing it juſt after the mention of the *Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt.* So that all ſuch Abuſes of Speech which entrench on Piety and Good Manners, or Truth and Sincerity, are certainly forbidden by him. But there is one particular Vice of Converſation, which he hath with moſt force of Argument forbidden; and yet (which is a great ſhame to any that would be called Chriſtians) none more common among ſome who would pretend to underſtand the Methods of Converſation and the beſt Modes of Speaking; and that is *the profane Cuſtom of Swearing.* I take it for granted, that all are *Chriſtians* among us, till they diſown it themſelves; and however men may act, they are not willing to renounce all hopes of Salvation by Chriſt: I beſeech them then to conſider, what a Contempt of his Authority is implied in this, too faſhionable ſort of Profaneneſs? The other Duties I have mentioned, have a great Difficulty in them, as to our Tempers and Inclinations; but nothing of that Nature can be ſo much as pretended as

v. 31.

Matt. 5. 34, 37.

to

to this. For no man could ever ſay, that he had a *Swearing Conſtitution*, or that it was an *Infirmity* of his *Nature*. There is nothing in it but the Tyranny of a very bad Cuſtom; which every Prudent Man, as well as Good Chriſtian, will ſee Cauſe to break. But what a Reproach is it, to the very Profeſſion of Chriſtianity among us, for ſo plain, ſo eaſie a Command of Chriſt to be broken ſo commonly, ſo unconcernedly, ſo impertinently, as is every day done; and yet they call Chriſt *Lord, Lord*? In all Ages, there were ſome pretended Chriſtians, who did not ſincerely obey the Commands of our Saviour; but their Hypocriſie was of a finer and more Artificial make; this is groſs and rude, without the common Reſpect which is due to the Religion we all profeſs to be that, or hope to be ſaved by. Some ſay, a Cuſtom in it ſelf is no Sin, becauſe it is no Act; but certainly a cuſtomary breach of a plain Command is ſo much greater a Sin, as it implies a greater Contempt of him that made it; and when Cuſtom hath taken away the Senſe of the Fault, it is ſo much more aggravated by it. It is really a matter to be wonder'd at, that among Perſons profeſſing

profeſſing a better ſort of Breeding, as well as *Chriſtianity*; a vitious Cuſtom, ſo untempting in it ſelf, ſo unbecoming the Decency of Converſation, ſo Affronting to the Divine Majeſty, ſo directly contrary to the Commands of Chriſt, ſhould get ſo deep a rooting in ordinary Converſation, that it ſeems almoſt impoſſible to be reformed. But till men do think of breaking off ſuch a Practice as this, I deſpair of ever ſeeing them reform other things which have a deeper root in their natural Inclinations, and have greater Advantages as to this World.

III. The Commands of Chriſt extend to the whole Courſe of our Actions; ſo, as that we lead *a ſober, righteous and godly Life.*

1 As to *Sobriety. Take heed to your ſelves*, ſaith Chriſt, *leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs.* Theſe are ſomewhat hard words for that which our Age hath learnt to expreſs in much ſofter terms of *Eating and Drinking well.* Luxury ſeems a thing quite forgotten to be a Sin, among thoſe who are moſt guilty of Luk. 21. 34.

of it; and Intemperance thought so uncertain a thing, as though it were impossible to tell when Persons are guilty of it. 'Tis true, that Temperance may vary as to the Degrees and Limits of it; and we do not pretend to define it by Grains and Scruples. But still there ought to be *a Governing our Appetites according to Reason*, and that is Temperance. But what is *Reason* in this Case? Some send us to the Brutes to find out what Reason is; and they tell us, it lies in a plain simple Diet, such as the Beasts use, without provoking or raising the Appetite. But I know not where God hath forbidden the use of Art, as to our Eating and Drinking; and if this were so, we must practice Temperance only in the use of Water and Acorns. If meer *Satisfaction of Nature* were the exact Rule of Temperance, then eating or drinking any thing beyond it were a Sin; which would fill the Minds of those who are afraid to sin, with infinite Scruples; and make all Feasting unlawfull. Yet our Saviour was present at one in *Cana* of *Galilee*; and did a Miracle relating to it. But we need not run into Niceties in this matter; for, *Intemperance* is either

ther an over-charging of Nature, ſo as to make it ſink or totter under the load; or it is a wanton humouring and pleaſing the Appetite, not, for the ſervice of Nature, but for the Pleaſure of Eating and Drinking; Or, it is as S. *Paul* calls it, making *a God of their belly*, by Sacrificing their Time, their Study, their Eſtates in order to the filling and pleaſing of it. Any of theſe ways, it is no Difficulty to underſtand what *Intemperance* is; I wiſh it were as eaſie to avoid it. Phil. 3. 19.

2. As to *Righteouſneſs*. Our Saviour hath given one admirable Rule; which all Perſons agree to be of excellent uſe in all Contracts and Tranſactions of men with one another; *v.* 31. *And as ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo to them likewiſe.* Which is an univerſal Rule of Juſtice and Equity, if it be underſtood of what we would have others to do to us according to Reaſon, and not according to the Partial Affection we are apt to have to our ſelves. For this Rule is founded upon the ſecond great Commandment, as our Saviour calls it, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* Matth. 22. 39.

3. As

3. As to *Godliness.* He lays the Foundation of that upon the first and great Commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul and with all thy Strength.* We need not to question, but where-ever there is such a Love of God, as is here required, there will be true Godliness in all the parts of it. And where this is wanting, all external shews of Devotion want the true Life and Spirit of it. For it is the Love of God which makes all our weak and imperfect Services to be acceptable to him; and without it all our Prayers and our Fastings, and all other appearances of Devotion, are empty and insipid Formalities. Not, but that the Acts themselves are commendable; but, they are like a Body without a Soul, dull and heavy; or like the leaves of a Tree in Autumn, which make a great noise in the Wind, but are dry, sapless and soon fall to the Ground. But where the Love of God prevails, it keeps up the Life and Order and Vigour of Devotion; and preserves it from being tainted by hypocrisie, or choaked by the love of this World, or decaying from want of Constancy and Resolution.

Matth. 22. 37.

Thus

Thus I have ſet before you ſome of the moſt remarkable Duties of Chriſtianity; not ſuch as depend on the Opinions and Fancies of men; but ſuch as our Bleſſed Saviour, the great Lawgiver of his Church, hath made the neceſſary Conditions of our Salvation by him.

And what now can we ſay for our ſelves? We do call Chriſt *Lord, Lord*; or elſe we renounce our Baptiſmal Vow, and all hopes of Salvation by him. But can we ſay that *we love God*, when we love what he hates, *viz.* Sin? Can we ſay, *we love him with all our Heart and Soul*, when our Hearts are ſo much divided between him and the Vanities of this World? Can we ſay, *we love him with all our Might*, when our Love to God is apt to grow cold and remiſs upon any apprehenſion of Difficulties? Can we ſay, that we *love our Neighbour as our Selves*, when we deſpiſe and ſcorn him, or over-reach and defraud him, or oppreſs and ruin him? If it go not ſo far, are we as tender of his Reputation as of our own; as unwilling to ſee him injured, as ready to help him in his Neceſſities, as we ſhould deſire it from others, if we were in the ſame Circumſtances?

If ſtrict Sobriety and Temperance be the Duties of Chriſtians, where are thoſe Virtues to be generally found? I do not ſpeak of particular Perſons; but I am afraid, there is hardly ſuch a thing left as a *Sober Party* among us. What profane, cuſtomary Swearing is every-where to be met with? What Complaints are daily made of the Abounding of all ſorts of Wickedneſs, even to an open Scorn and Contempt, not barely of *Chriſtianity*, but of any kind of *Religion*? For, many who have long denied the *Power*, ſeem to be grown weary of the very *Form of Godlineſs*; unleſs it ſerves ſome particular End and Deſign. So that, if we look abroad in the World, we find little Regard ſhew'd to the Precepts of Chriſt; and yet thoſe who commit theſe things call Chriſt *Lord, Lord*. What is the meaning of all this groſs Hypocriſie? Nothing would have been thought more Abſurd or Ridiculous, than for one who uſed no kind of Abſtinence, to be thought a *Pythagorean*; or one that indulged his Paſſions a *Stoick*; or one who eats Fleſh and drinks Wine a *Brachman*, or *Banian*. It is really as much for any one to break the known and particular Precepts of Chriſt,

Chriſt, and yet deſire to be thought a *Chriſtian*. For, a looſe, profane and debauched Chriſtian, is a Contradiction in Morality; it is to be a Chriſtian againſt Chriſt, to call him *Lord, Lord*, and yet to defie his Laws and Authority. A Star without Light, a Guide without Eyes, a Man without Reaſon, a Sun with nothing but Spots, are not more abſurd Suppoſitions, than a Chriſtian without any Grace or Vertue.

But let us ſay what we will, there are and will be ſuch, who will own Chriſt and call him *Lord, Lord*, and yet will not part with their ſins for him. There were multitudes of ſuch formerly who would lay down their Lives for the Ground he trod on, and yet would not mortifie one Sin for his ſake. The Reaſon is ſtill the ſame which our Saviour mentions, they hope that calling him *Lord, Lord*, will make amends for all; and yet it is not poſſible that fairer warning ſhould be given to any, than he hath given in this Caſe, that let them pretend what they will, he will ſay to them at the great Day, *Depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity*. O dreadful Sentence! Not, to be mention'd without Horrour, nor to Mat. 7. 23. Luk. 13. 27.

be thought upon without Aſtoniſhment. How miſerable, for ever miſerable, muſt their condition be, whom Chriſt at that day ſhall bid to *Depart* from him! "What is this, ſome will be apt "to ſay, but to put all Chriſtians in- "to utter Deſpair? For, who is there "that can ſay, that he hath done all "that Chriſt hath ſaid? Truly we have a ſufficient Ground for deep Humility and ſerious Repentance, and timely Reformation. But there is a great difference between *the Failing of our Duty* and *the Works of Iniquity*; between the *Infirmities* of thoſe who ſincerely endeavour to do his Will, and the *Preſumptuous Sins* of thoſe who deſpiſe it; between *Sins committed and heartily repented of*; and *Sins habitually practiſed and continued in, without any Marks of Amendment.* Such muſt go out of this World in a State of Sin, and therefore can expect nothing but that dreadfull Sentence, which I tremble at the very thoughts of Repeating.

But there are others, who in the ſincerity of their Hearts have endeavour'd to do his Will; and whoſe Sincerity will be ſo far accepted by him, that he will ſay to them at that Day, *Come ye*

Matt. 25. 34

bleſſed

blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.

To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us through the Mediation of Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON VIII.

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March *the* 13th, 169⅘.

Romans VIII. 6.

For, to be carnally minded is Death; but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace.

IN theſe Words is imply'd a Diſtribution of Mankind into thoſe who are *carnally* and *ſpiritually minded*; which Diſtinction is ſo large and compre-

preſenſive, as to take in all ſorts and conditions of Men; and of ſo great Moment and Importance, that their *Life* or *Death*, *Happineſs* or *Miſery depend* upon it. But, conſidering the Mixture of Good and Evil in Mankind, it is not an eaſie matter to ſet the Bounds of the *carnal and ſpiritual Mind*; and conſidering the frequent Impunity and Security of bad Men, and the Fears and Troubles, which the beſt are not exempted from, it ſeems next to impoſſible to make out (at leaſt as to this Life) that *to be carnally minded is Death, but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace.* Yet, our Apoſtle doth not ſeem to confine the Conſequences here mention'd to another World, (altho' the full Accompliſhment of them be only there to be expected;) but if we attend to his Scope and Deſign in the End of the foregoing Chapter, and the Beginning of this, we ſhall find that even in this Life the reſult of a *carnal Mind* is a ſort of a Spiritual *Death*; and of a Spiritual Mind is *Life and Peace*: For, when St. *Paul* in the 7th Chapter had repreſented himſelf as *carnal and ſold under Sin*, although there were great ſtrugglings between the Convicti- Rom. 7.14

ons of his Conſcience, and the ſtrength of carnal Inclinations; yet, as long as the latter prevailed ſo that *he could not do the things* that his Mind and Reaſon told him he ought to do; but *did thoſe*
19, 20. *things which he* was convinced *he ought not to have done*: The more he reflected upon himſelf, the more ſad and miſerable he found his Condition to be, as appears by that Emphatical expreſſion which follow'd upon it, *O wretched*
7. 24. *Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* But he no ſooner finds hopes of Delivery and Eſcape out of that Eſtate, but he breaks forth into Tranſport of Joy and inward
25. Satisfaction. *Thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Not meerly a *Victory* over *Death*, but over *Sin* too: And ſo he begins this Chapter after a triumphant
8. 1. manner; *There is therefore no Condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus; who walk not after the Fleſh, but after*
2. *the Spirit. For the Lord of the Spirit of Life which was in Chriſt Jeſus hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death:* He that groaned under his *Captivity* before to *the Law of Sin*, doth now rejoyce in his *Deliverance* from it

by

by the Grace of the Goſpel. For, what could not be done by natural Freedom, by the Power of the Law and the Force of Reaſon, is brought to paſs by the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace given to the Souls of Men by *Jeſus Chriſt*. *For what* 3.
the Law could not do in that it was weak through the Fleſh: What was that which the Law could not do? It could awaken, convince, terrifie and confound the Conſciences of Sinners under the Senſe and Apprehenſion of their Sins; but it could neither ſatisfie the Juſtice of God, nor the Minds of Men; it could not remove the Guilt, nor take away the Force and Power of Sin. But *God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinfull Fleſh, and for ſin condemned ſin in the Fleſh*; i. e. *Jeſus Chriſt* becoming an expiatory Sacrifice for Sin, took off the damning Power of Sin; and by the prevailing Efficacy of his Grace ſubdued the ſtrength and force of it to ſuch a degree, *That the Righteouſneſs of the* 4.
Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Fleſh but after the Spirit. How could this be, if St. *Paul* ſtill conſidered himſelf in the ſame Condition he did in the foregoing Chapter? For if he were ſtill *in Captivity to the Law of Sin in his Mem-*

Members, how was it poſſible that *the Righteouſneſs of the Law ſhould be fulfilled in him?* How could he *walk not after the Fleſh but after the Spirit, if the Good which he would he did not, and the Evil which he would not that he did?* For theſe things are ſo repugnant to each other, that when they are ſpoken of the ſame Perſon, it muſt be under different Conſiderations; the one of him, as meerly under *the Power* of the *Law*; the other, as under the *Grace and Influence of the Goſpel.* The one was like rough and a churliſh ſort of Phyſick, which ſearches into every Part, and puts all the ill Humours of the Body into Motion, and makes a general Diſturbance and Uneaſineſs within, but yet lets them remain where they were; the other is like a gentle but more effectual Remedy, which carries off the Strength and Power of inward Corruptions, and alters the Habit and Temper, and puts quite another Diſpoſition into us, which produces very different Effects upon us. For, inſtead of Horrour and Deſpair, and inward Anguiſh and Confuſion, there will follow a new Life of Joy and Peace here, and Eternal Happineſs hereafter.

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And this is what the Apoſtle means in the Words of the Text; *To be carnally minded*, &c. Wherein are two things, which very much deſerve our Conſideration.

I. The different Tempers of Men's Minds; ſome are *carnally* and others *ſpiritually minded.*

II. The different Conſequences which follow them: *To be carnally minded is Death; but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace.*

I. The different Tempers of Men's Minds. The different Denominations are taken from *the Fleſh* and *the Spirit*; which are here repreſented as two Principles ſo different from each other, that the ſame Perſon cannot be ſuppoſed to be acted by both of them. For, as the *Apoſtle* ſaith in the foregoing Words, *They that are after the Fleſh do mind the things of the Fleſh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* Where *the Fleſh*, in a Moral ſenſe, takes in all our ſenſual Inclinations which are ſinfull either in their Nature or Degree. *The Spirit* is that Divine Principle, which poſſeſſes the Mind with the Love Ver. 5.

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and Eſteem of Spiritual things, and keeps our natural Inclinations within the Compaſs of God's Law. To be *carnally minded*, is to be under the Influence of *carnal things*, ſo as to make the Purſuit of them our chief Deſign: To be *ſpiritually minded* is to have ſo deep and juſt a Senſe of God and his Law upon our Minds, as to make it our buſineſs to pleaſe him, and therefore to ſubdue all ſuch Inclinations which are repugnant to his Will.

But here lies the main Difficulty; how to judge concerning this matter ſo, as to be able to determine whether we our ſelves be *carnally* or *ſpiritually minded*. Which is a thing of ſo great Conſequence for us to know, that the Peace of our Minds, the true Comfort of our Lives, our due Preparation for Death, and a happy Eternity, do all depend upon. And yet that this is a real Difficulty will appear from theſe Conſiderations.

(1.) It requires a greater Knowledge of our ſelves (as to our ſpiritual Condition) than moſt Perſons in the World can pretend to. For it is not a ſlight and ſuperficial View of our ſelves, not a tranſient, ſudden Reflection, nor a partial

partial Inquiry into our inward Paſſions, and the Courſe of our Actions, which can make us capable of paſſing a true Judgment upon the Temper of our Minds; but there muſt be a true Light, a ſerious and diligent Search, frequent Recollection, free and deliberate Thoughts, long Obſervation and due Compariſon of our ſelves with our ſelves and with the Law of God, before we can form a juſt Opinion as to the prevailing Temper and Diſpoſition of our Minds.

It's true, this is not neceſſary in all Perſons; for ſome (and I am afraid too many) are ſo *carnally minded*, that the leaſt Reflection or Conſideration would make them ſee how bad their condition is. For, they have no true Senſe of God or Religion at all; they have no ſerious thoughts or apprehenſions of Divine and Spiritual things; this World they pretend to know ſomething of, and have too great an Eſteem of the Vanities and Pleaſures of it; for theſe wholly take up their Hearts and Time; and they have a ſavour and reliſh for any thing that tends to their Greatneſs or Honour or Entertainment of their Appetites or Fancies here; but

if we ſpeak to them of another World, of God and Heaven and a Spiritual Diſpoſition of Soul; either they look on us with Amazement, as if they were inſenſible of ſuch things; or elſe with Scorn and Contempt, as if we went about to deceive them. Alas! They are too wiſe to be impoſed upon by us; and they have other things to mind (I am ſure not greater or weightier) which take up all their Time; and ſo what through the Buſineſs and the Impertinencies of this World, their *Time paſſeth away as a Tale that is told*; and as though it were a pleaſant *Tale*, they are troubled only to think it will be ſo ſoon at an End. But theſe are not the Perſons, who require any ſuch Care to paſs a right Judgment upon them; for they can pretend to nothing that is *ſpiritual*, as to the Tempers and Diſpoſitions of their Minds; and therefore ſuch as theſe muſt be ſet aſide, for it is too apparent that they are only ſenſual and *carnally minded*.

But as the *Papiſts* diſtinguiſh of *the Body of Chriſt*, ſo may we of the *carnal Mind*; there is a groſs and *Capernaitical* Senſe; and there is a more refined and (if I may uſe the Expreſſion) a more

more *Spiritual* Senſe of it. For altho' it be a great Abſurdity in them to ſuppoſe that a meer Body can be after *the Manner of a Spirit*; yet it is not ſo to ſuppoſe a *Carnal Mind* to have a Mixture of ſome Spiritual Qualities and Diſpoſitions in it. And this makes the difference ſo much harder to be perceived between the *carnally* and *ſpiritually minded*; ſince there are the ſame Faculties of Perception, Reaſoning, and Application in both; and the ſame common Principles of Religion may be owned by both; which may in Reaſon be ſuppoſed to make ſome Impreſſion on the Minds of the more ingenuous Part of Mankind, who are not given over to ſuch a *Reprobate Senſe* as the former were. Now, how to diſtinguiſh between frequent good Impreſſions on the Mind, and an habitual Temper and Diſpoſition, is not ſo eaſie to all who are concerned to diſtinguiſh them. And yet a Perſon may be throughly convinced of his Sins, and tremble at the Apprehenſion of the Juſtice and Severity of God againſt them; he may have many Checks and Reluctancies of Conſcience while he goes on to commit them; he may ſigh and groan and lament

lament under the wretchedneſs of his Condition by his Love of Sin; and yet may love his Sins all the while more than God or Heaven, or any thing in Competition with them. The difference doth not lie in the Nature or Number of the Impreſſions from without, but in the inward Principle of Action. A Ciſtern may be full of Water falling down from Heaven, which may run as long as that holds which fell into it; but a Spring hath it riſing up within, and ſo continues running when the other is ſpent. A *carnal Mind* may have many Spiritual Convictions, and good Motions and Inclinations; but after a time they wear off and leave no laſting Effect behind them; but where there is a Spring in the Soul, there is a freſh and continual Supply of ſuch Inclinations, as keep up a conſtant Courſe of a Spiritual Life; which
Joh. 7. 38. our *Saviour* calls *Rivers of living Water.*

I confeſs it is hard to determine what a *Habit* or *Principle* abiding in our Minds is; yet the *Scripture* doth evidently ſuppoſe ſuch a thing, when it
Joh. 3 3.6. ſpeaks of the *New Birth*, and the *New*
1. 13. *Life*, and the *New Creature*, and the

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Children of God; all which are very insignificant Terms, if there be not under them something answerable to the *First Principles* of *Life*; and if there be not a Divine Spirit dwelling and acting in the Souls of good Men, and raising them up above carnal and sensual Objects to things Divine and Spiritual, and carrying them through the Passage of this World so as to prepare them for a better. But yet there may be many things which carry some Resemblance to this *Principle* within, which come not up to it. There may be such Principles of Education and good Manners, such Awakenings of Conscience, such a Strength of Natural Reason and common Ingenuity, as may carry one on to do some very good things, and yet he may fall short of having a true Principle of Spiritual Life in him. But then, there must be another Principle within, which contradicts this, and prevails over it, and carries him on to the Love of Sin, which proves too strong for the Love of God and the due Regard to Spiritual things.

Rom 8. 8, 9. 2 Cor. 5. 17. 1 John 3. 9, 10.

The Result of this Discourse is, since the *Carnal Mind* is not to be taken meer-

ly for such a one which stands out in opposition to the Gospel, nor for such a one which is insensible of *Spiritual* things; but such as may consist with a common Profession of Religion, and have the same Convictions and good Impressions which others have; it doth require a more than ordinary Acquaintance with our selves to be able to judge aright, whether the Temper of our Minds be *Carnal* or *Spiritual*.

2. But this is not all; for, since there is so great a Mixture of Good and Evil in the better sort of Mankind, there is required not barely Knowledge of our selves, but a good Judgment too to adjust the Proportions of Good and Evil in particular Persons, so as to be able to judge whether we are *carnally* or *spiritually minded*. For, as those who are *Carnal*, while they follow their carnal Inclinations, may have many inward Strugglings by spiritual Convictions; so those who are *spiritually minded* may meet with many Combats from the Flesh, which may be troublesome, where it cannot prevail. But there is a great difference between the *Spirit* struggling against the *Flesh* in the *carnally minded*, and the *Flesh* struggling

gling againſt the *Spirit* in thoſe who are *ſpiritually minded*. For, where there is no perfect Victory, there will be ſome Oppoſition; and the beſt have ſo many Failings to complain of in this World; ſo many Infirmities and Defects in their good Actions; ſo many Paſſions not brought into their due Order; ſo many Omiſſions of Perſonal and Relative Duties; ſuch Variety of Tempers and Weakneſs of Reſolution; ſuch Coldneſs in Devotion and unreaſonable Dejections of Mind; ſo many unaccountable Fears, and ſuch dreadfull Apprehenſions of Death and the Conſequences of it; that theſe things muſt make great Abatements as to ſuch as are truly *ſpiritually minded*.

But by all theſe things the Difficulty ſtill increaſeth, and therefore it is time to come to the Reſolution of it; and that will be by ſhewing that the Difference between the *carnal* and *ſpiritual Mind* lies in theſe three Things.

1. In the deliberate Judgment and Choice.
2. In the prevailing Intereſt.
3. In the conſtant Rule and Meaſure of Actions.

1: In the deliberate Judgment and Choice. For the main difference as to the *carnal* and *ſpiritual Mind*, lies in the different End which is aimed at by them. Where the chief End is the pleaſing our ſelves, and the enjoying of any thing as our Happineſs under the *Supream Good*, whatever Thoughts and Intentions we may at ſome times have, to repent of our Sins, and turn our Souls from the Love of Sin to the Love of God, as long as we continue purſuing a wrong End, we have too great Reaſon to conclude our Minds to be yet *carnal and ſold under ſin.* For while the *Apoſtle* repreſents himſelf ſo, he tells us he had his Conſcience thoroughly awakened with the Senſe of his Sins, even of thoſe which the World is leaſt apt to be ſenſible of, *inward* and *ſecret Sins*; he was not only convinced of the *Excellency* and *Purity* of the Law, but had ſome *Pleaſure* and Satisfaction in it; he had ſome hearty deſires to be rid of his beloved Sins; but yet they were too hard for him, he ſighed and lamented under his deplorable Condition; but till the *Grace of God* came to ſet him free, he was in a miſerable and hopeleſs State.

Rom. 7. 7, 8. 9. 12. 14. 22.

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But how is it, that the Grace of God thus refines and purifies the Minds of Men, ſo as of *Carnal* to make them *Spiritual*, when the ſame Paſſions and Inclinations remain? A Change there muſt be, and that real and ſpiritual, and therefore in our beſt Faculties, *viz.* our Underſtandings and our Wills; not by a Revelation of New Objects to the Mind, nor by offering any Force upon the Will; but by fixing the Judgment of the Mind and the Choice of the Will upon the beſt and moſt deſirable Objects, which is God himſelf, as the *Supreme Good*. The Turn of the Soul which makes one *ſpiritually minded*, muſt not be only from groſs and ſenſual Inclinations, but from every other kind of Good, which ſtands in Competition with the Supreme. A truly *ſpiritual Mind* is one that is poſſeſſed with the Love of God above all, and that values other things, as they tend to the Enjoyment of Him. God muſt be the only Center of his Hopes and Deſigns; for in him alone his true Happineſs conſiſts: As the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* Pſ. 73. 25. *and there is none upon Earth I deſire beſides thee.* Whatever falls ſhort of

this, may agree to a *carnal Mind*; but a *carnal Mind* can never love God as he ought to be loved; not with a Supreme tranſcendent Degree of Love, which is alone proper and ſuitable to him. All other kind of Love is beneath his Infinite Goodneſs and Perfections; and to love him as we do his Creatures, is to do him the greateſt Diſhonour, for it levels their Perfections, and ſuppoſes them to deſerve the ſame Degree of Affection from us.

But there may be many *ſpiritual Notions* in Men's minds about God and Religion; about myſtical Unions, and the Participations of Divine Love; many ſeeming Spiritual Raptures and Ecſtaſies, and yet there may not be this *ſpiritual Mind*. For the Heats of Enthuſiaſm may ſeem to be very *Spiritual*, but are of another kind; they are *Spiritual*, as they are the Effects of a great heating of the *Spirits* by the Force of a vehement Imagination; which hath been often accompanied with as vehement an Inclination to ſenſual Pleaſures; which ſhews the plain Difference between an *exalted Fancy* and a *ſpiritual Mind*.

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A *Spiritual Mind* is ſuch a one as is not only throughly convinced of the Reality of Spiritual things; but of their Excellency and Deſirableneſs, above any others that can be offer'd to our Choice. It ſees through all the glittering Vanities of this World; and ſoars above the moſt tempting and bewitching Follies of Mankind here: It frequently retires from the Noiſe and Confuſion, the Hurry and Vexation of Worldly Affairs, that it may converſe more freely with inviſible Objects; not meerly by way of Contemplation, but by raiſing the Affections of the Soul towards them, as the things which it hath choſen for its Happineſs.

And this makes a wonderfull Alteration in the thoughts that theſe different Tempers have concerning the ſame things. I do not deny but thoſe who have carnal Minds may have ſome raiſed and ſpiritual Thoughts, but they are too cold and ſpeculative; they may have noble and refined Speculations about the inviſible World; may be fully convinced that the things *which are ſeen*, could not be what they are, were it not for the things which *are not ſeen*;

and that the things which *are not seen*, are of incomparably greater value than those which are so much more admired, because *they are seen*. But we must not conclude, that because Men do really believe *Spiritual* things, therefore they are *spiritually minded*, (for that were to suppose all to be *Saints* who are not *Atheists*;) but there must be such a due Preference in our Minds, of that Invisible and Eternal State, above all that is accounted great and desirable here, as gives a just Denomination to one that he is *spiritually minded*; i.e. that his Mind and Soul is fixed upon another World as his proper Happiness, and other things are regarded and valued in subserviency to it.

2. A Spiritual Mind is discerned by the *Prevailing Interest*. For, as long as we are made up of *Flesh* and *Spirit*, there will and must be a Combat between them: *For the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would:* And yet the same Apostle soon after adds, *They that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; the Meaning is, that,

Gal. 5. 17.

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that, in ſome particular Inſtances and leſs remarkable Caſes, the *Fleſh* may ſometimes be too hard for the *Spirit*; but in all notorious Inſtances of the *Luſts of the Fleſh*, which he reckons up; and in the main Iſſue of all leſſer Combats the *Spirit* will be too hard for the *Fleſh* in thoſe who are *ſpiritually minded*; as the *Fleſh* will be too hard for the *Spirit* at laſt in thoſe who are *carnally minded*. If we look on them in the time of the Combat, it will be hard to judge which is moſt likely to prevail; but thoſe may have the better in ſome particular Skirmiſhes, who may loſe very much in the State of the War; a good Man may be foiled by Surpriſe or under ſome diſadvantage, but he will recover himſelf, and, it may be, gain Ground by his Falls; and a bad Man may in ſome fits of Devotion ſeem ſo *ſpiritually minded*, that one might be apt to think he were quite changed, till he returns to his former Practices. If we had been to judge of *Ahab* in the time of his Humiliation; and of *David* in the time of his Impenitency after his Sins of Adultery and Murther, we ſhould have thought in common Juſtice and Charity, the latter had been the *carnal*, and

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the former the *spiritual minded* Man. But it was quite otherwise; which shews that we are not to judge of Men's spiritual Condition by sudden and violent Motions whether good or bad; but by that Interest which prevails with them in the whole Course of their Lives. To give a general Character of a Man from some violent Passion against the Tenour of his Life, would be like drawing the Picture of a Man in a Fit of an Epilepsy, or a convulsive Motion of his Face. And to believe a Man to be a good Man, because he hath some good Moods and passionate Fits of Devotion, is, as if we should take a piece of rotten Wood for a true *Phosphorus*, because it shines sometimes; or suppose *Judas* to be a Saint, because he was so much in our Saviour's Company. The inward Habits and Dispositions of Men's minds may be cover'd over and disguised a great while; but a tempting Occasion lays them open; as no doubt *Judas* did not get his Habit of Covetousness of a sudden, but it was still growing and ripening under a fair Appearance; and when the proper Season came, the secret Malignity brake forth; and the Temptation of

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Thirty Pieces of Silver discover'd the Baseness and Hypocrisie of his Heart. Sometimes the Vein of Hypocrisie lies deep, and is cover'd over with such a fair out-side, that no one can have Reason to mistrust it, till it discovers it self, and then the Corruption is found so loathsome, as to render ordinary Sincerity suspicious. But this is a common Fault, either to be too easily deceived, or too unreasonably mistrustfull; there is no certainty in a Deduction from particulars, but where the Causes are equal and necessary. It is as absurd an Inference that there is no such thing as a *Spiritul Mind*, because some who have pretended to it have been found *Carnal*; as that there is no such thing as common Honesty among Men, because some who have long born the Name of honest Men have been found great Cheats and Impostors. But when a predominant Habit doth discover it self, the Person must bear that Title and Denomination which it gives him.

3. A *Spiritual Mind* is known by the general Conformity of Actions to a *Divine* and *Spiritual* Rule; and so a carnal Mind by following the *Bent* and *Inclinations*

tions of the *Flesh*. And there lies a great Part of the Difference; for such who lay no Restraint upon their Natural Inclinations must needs be *carnally minded*; because the *Flesh*, as St. *Chrysostom* observes, *is not taken, by St.* Paul, *meerly for the Body, but for the corrupt Part of our selves, as consisting of Soul and Body*. It is observed by *Cicero* 3. *de Rep. That Mankind came into the World in a very ill Condition, with a Body naked, frail and infirm, with a Mind subject to Troubles, dejected with Fears, impatient of Labour, prone to Lust; but in the midst of all this, there is a certain Divine Flame of Wit and Understanding, which lies as it were buried and overwhelmed; but with great Care and Industry may be so preserved and improved, as to command our Appetites and govern our Passions.* But alas! How little doth the Reason of Mankind signifie to the greatest Part of them? It helps them to see their Folly, and like a Sea-light to a sinking Ship in a dark Night, makes those who are aboard, to behold their Misery, without helping them out of it. If the Frame of human Nature be considered in it self, and by way of Speculation,

Chrysost. in Gal. 5. 17.

Aug. c. Julian. l. 4. c. 12.

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we have no Cauſe to complain of it; for as God hath given us inferiour Faculties ſuitable to the Conſtitution of our Bodies, ſo he hath likewiſe Superiour, which are capable of controlling and covering them. But when Habit and Cuſtom is joyned with a vicious Inclination, how little doth human Reaſon ſignifie? All the Conſiderations of Natural Order, and Decency, and Regularity, and good Example, are eaſily over-born by the ſtrong Propenſities of a corrupt Inclination; which hurries Men on to ſatisfie firſt their brutal Appetites, and leaves Conſideration till afterwards. So that Reaſon ſeems by ſuch an *After-game*, rather given to torment, than to reform them.

Therefore the wiſe God hath ſuperadded his own Law to inforce that of Reaſon by a greater Authority; that Men may think themſelves more concerned to take care of their Actions, when they muſt give an Account of them to one infinitely above them. But what can Mankind do in ſuch a wretched Condition? For the Law of it ſelf is but like a Toyl to a wild Beaſt; the more he ſtruggles, the more he is intangled; ſo that he ſees his Miſery by it, but not his Remedy. But

But such is the Goodness and Mercy of God towards Mankind, that he hath never refused to accept those, who have sincerely endeavour'd to do his Will according to the Measure of that Assistance which he hath given them. Thus we find Characters of Men in all Ages, who were said to be *Righteous before God, just and upright and perfect Men*; and yet some of the most eminent of these had remarkable failings, as *Noah*, *Abraham* and *Job*; yet they had extraordinary Testimonies of God's approving their Integrity and passing by those Faults which were contrary to the general Design and Tenour of their Lives.

Gen. 6. 9. 17. 1. Job 1. 1, 2, 3. Ps. 37. 37.

I confess we meet with two Instances to the contrary in Scripture, which deserve our Consideration; and those were of extraordinary Persons too, eminent for their long and faithfull Service of God; and yet upon single Faults committed by them, he was very severe with them. Which may seem to take much off from this Lenity and Goodness of God towards such who have a general Sincerity of Mind towards him. But, if we more strictly consider these two Cases, we shall find there

there was something very provoking in the Circumstances of them, which made God so much more displeased with the committing them. For, they were Sins committed by them, in their publick Capacities, and about such things wherein the Honour of God was more particularly concerned.

The first is the Case of *Moses*, who was a great Pattern of Wisdom and Meekness and Faithfulness, for forty Years together, in the Conduct of a very froward People in the Wilderness; yet at last he happen'd to fail in some Part of his Duty, and *God* was so angry with him, that *he would not hear his Prayer for going into Canaan*, but he cut him off in the Wilderness at last, as he did the People for their Unbelief. But what was this Sin of *Moses* which made God so highly displeased with him? If we read the Passage as it is related in the History of the Fact, it is not so easie to find it out. The People murmured for want of Water, God upon *Moses* his Prayer commands him, to take his Rod, and in the Assembly of the People, *to speak to the Rock* and the Water should issue out. *Moses* assembles the People, expostulates the matter with them,

Deut. 3. 24, 25.

Numb 20. 2, 3. 6. 8.

them, *ſtrikes the Rock twice* and the Wa-
10. ters came. Where is the great Sin of *Moſes* all this while? Yet, he often re-
Deut. 1. 37. peats it, that *God was angry with him* for ſomething done at that time. *God*
4. 21. himſelf ſaith, *Moſes and Aaron rebelled*
Num. 27. *againſt him*; and that *they did not ſan-*
14. *ctifie him* before the People: the *Pſal-*
Pſ. 106. 33. *miſt* ſaith, *they provoked his Spirit, ſo that he ſpake unadviſed with his Lips.* After all, the Sin of *Moſes* was a Mixture of Anger and ſome kind of Infidelity: For, the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *he was*
Num. 20. *highly provoked*; and *God* himſelf ſaith,
12. *they believed him not, to ſanctifie him in the Eye of the Children of Iſrael.* The Fault then ſeems to lie in this, that they were more concerned for their own Honour than God's, and did not ſo clearly attribute the Power of the Miracle to *God*, but that the People might think they aſſumed it to themſelves, as appears by their Words to the Peo-
ver. 10. ple, *Hear now, ye Rebels, muſt we fetch you Water out of the Rock?* Which Expreſſion doth not give *God* the *Glory* he expected from them; and he is ſo tender in matters of his own *Honour*, that he would ſuffer none to encroach upon it, no not his faithfull Servants;

but

but he made them ſmart for attempting it.

The other caſe is that of *David's Numbering the People*; and he was *a Man after God's own Heart*, of great Sincerity and Courage and Conſtancy in his Service. Yet of a ſudden he took up a Reſolution that he would have *all the People number'd*, without any apparent Reaſon for it. And although he was diſcouraged from the Attempt by thoſe about him, yet he would be obey'd. And what came of it? Truly, before the thing was completed he grew very uneaſie at what he had done, for it is ſaid, *His heart ſmote him after that he had numbred the People*; *and* David *ſaid to the Lord, I have ſinned greatly in what I have done.* And yet in the Book of *Chronicles* it is ſaid, that *he finiſhed it not, becauſe Wrath fell for it againſt Iſrael.* What was the Cauſe of all this Severity againſt *David*? Was it ſuch an unpardonable Sin for a King to underſtand the Number of his People? Suppoſe it a Failing, yet why ſhould *God* be ſo angry for one ſuch failing in him that had ſerved *God* ſo ſincerely as *David* had done? There muſt be ſomething extraordina-

1 Sam. 24. 9.

1 Chr. 27. 24.

ry in this Case; for, *God* sometimes
Exod. 30. 11. 38. 25. Num. 1. 2. 19. 26. 4. 1 Sam. 11 8. 2 Sam. 18. 1. supposes *the People to be Number'd*; and in some Cases he requires or allows it; why then is he so displeased now at the doing it? The best Account I know of it, is this; It was not a meer Piece of Vanity and Ostentation in *David*, (although that be displeasing to God,) but it was a thing (as designed by him) which was generally look'd on as inconsistent with the Fundamental Promise made to *Abraham*; and so it is mention'd in the *Chronicles*, why the *Numbering* was not exactly taken, because the Lord had said *He*
1 Chr. 27. 23. *would increase Israel like the Stars of the Heavens*. Which seems to imply that there was a general Notion received among the People, that since God promised to increase them *beyond Number*, no one ought to go about to take the exact Number of them. For, this must seem to savour of Infidelity, and a Contempt or Mistrust of God's fundamental Promise. But however upon such Occasions God might use two of his most faithfull Servants thus, yet we have no Reason to question his Readiness to pardon these and other their Failings upon a sincere Repentance,

tance, and to accept of their general Care and Endeavour to please him instead of a perfect Obedience.

But I have something farther to offer, for the clearing these two difficult Cases, *viz.* that there is a Difference to be observed between the Rule of God's Proceedings with particular Persons, as to the general Sincerity of their Actings; and the Measure of God's political Justice as to Persons in publick Capacities. The Reason is, because in the latter Cases, God may justly have a Regard, not meerly to the Actions themselves, but to the Circumstances of the People they are related to. Thus *Moses*, mentions it three several times, *The Lord was angry with me for your sakes*; and again, *the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter.* It seems he was so much concerned as to pray to God, and that earnestly, that he would give him leave to conduct the People into *Canaan*: but God would not grant his Request. But he tells the People that it was *for their sakes* that he was denied. *Furthermore, the Lord was angry with me for* Deut. 1. 37. 3. 26. 4. 21.

your ſakes, and ſware that I ſhould not go over Jordan, &c. So that the Blow which was given to the Head was for the ſake of the whole Body.

And it is remarkable in the Caſe of *David*, that before he fell into the Sin 2 Sam 24. 1. of Numbering the People, *The Anger of the Lord was kindled againſt* Iſrael; *and he moved* David *againſt them to ſay, Go Number* Iſrael *and* Judah. From whence it is evident, that the Sins of a People may provoke God to let Princes fall into ſuch Sins, which may give juſt occaſion to God to puniſh both together. But this is a very different Caſe from the Method of God's dealings with particular Perſons with regard to their Integrity, according to the Terms of the Covenant of Grace. Which is eſtabliſhed on ſuch Foundations, that we need not give way to Deſpondencies for the ſake of ſuch particular Acts of Severity.

II. I am now to conſider the different Conſequences of theſe two, *To be carnally minded is Death, but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace*; which, in ſhort, is, that the Advantage is far greater which comes to Mankind by one than by the other. And

And that will appear by comparing them together,

(1.) As under equal Circumſtances.

(2.) As under unequal Circumſtances.

1. As under equal Circumſtances. And here we have two ſorts of Perſons to conſider.

1. Thoſe who have Convictions of Conſcience going along with a *carnal Mind*. Such who look on the Conditions of Men in this World at a Diſtance, and judge only by Appearance, would be apt to think that thoſe who do allow themſelves all the Liberties which a *carnal Mind* doth incline them to, have very much the Advantage of thoſe who are under the Reſtraints of a *ſpiritual Mind*; for they are bound to ſevere Rules of Vertue and Mortification, *to deny all Ungodlineſs and Worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent World*; and theſe are thought to be very hard things; whereas ſuch who are not under theſe Difficulties, ſeem to lead the moſt pleaſant and eaſie Lives, enjoying

themſelves and being full of Noiſe and Confidence, and appear to be all Mirth and good Humour. But there is another Account to be taken of theſe things: If Men could look within and ſee all the ſecret Miſgivings, the inward Horrours of Conſcience, the Impatience and Diſſatisfaction they have, when they ſeriouſly reflect on their evil Courſes, it would quite alter their Apprehenſions of theſe things, and make them conclude with the Roman Orator, *That one Day ſpent according to the Rules of Vertue were to be preferr'd before everlaſting Debaucheries.* And he was no Fool, no Pedant, no mean and contemptible Perſon, who ſaid this, but a Man of Wit and Senſe, of Quality and Experience, who had Opportunities and Means enough to have purſued the moſt ſenſual and voluptuous Courſe of Life; which yet we ſee out of Judgment and Choice he deſpiſed, and preferr'd a far ſhorter Life according to the Rules of Vertue, before a vicious Immortality. And yet, how ſhort were the Incouragements to a good Life, and the Diſſuaſives from Sin among the beſt of them, in Compariſon of what we all know now by the Goſpel of Chriſt? They

Eſt autem unus dies bonè & ex præceptis tuis actus peccanti immortalitati anteferendus. Cicer. Tuſc. Qu. l. 5. p. 2.

They went no farther than meer Natural Reason and the common Sense of Mankind carried them; but we profess to believe *the Wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of Men*; and that there will be *a great and terrible Day, wherein Men must receive according to their Works, whether they be Good or Evil.*

Rom. 1. 18. 2. 5, 6. 16. 14. 10. 2 Cor. 5. 10, 11.

And will not this dreadfull Consideration awaken the drowsie and secure Sinner, and make him look about him betimes, while there is yet any hopes of Mercy? Will he not become so wise at least, as to enter into the Consideration of his Ways, and to look back on the former Course of his Life, to examine and compare that with the Law of God by which he must be judged? And if we have but Patience to do this, he will have no farther Patience with himself, for being guilty of such unspeakable Folly. He will abhorr himself for all his sensual and sinfull Delights; which will turn into the greatest Bitterness and Anguish to his Soul; He will lament his Folly and Wickedness with the deepest Sorrow; and take up sincere and firm Resolutions to return no more to the Practise of them.

And if this be the Reſult, as it ought to be, of all the diſtinguiſhing ſinfull Pleaſures of a *carnal Mind*, I leave it to the moſt impartial Mind to reſolve whether there will be the leaſt Advantage by purſuing them.

2. But we have too great Reaſon to ſuppoſe that Men may harden themſelves to ſuch a Degree of Wickedneſs, as to be inſenſible of the Folly of it, and to mock at thoſe who go about to reprove them for it. Such as theſe are at eaſe, becauſe they have no Senſe of their Condition; but ſo are thoſe in a Lethargy: Is their Caſe therefore to be envied; or compared with thoſe in Health altho' more ſenſible of Pain and Danger? Who ſeem to be better pleaſed at ſometimes, and tranſported with their own Imaginations than Men in a Frenzy? And yet no Man thinks their Condition happier for it. There is a ſort of *Moral Frenzy* which poſſeſſes ſome part of Mankind, who, are not only extravagant in their Actions, but aſſume ſuch a Degree of Confidence in committing them, as though the wiſe Men of all Ages had been the only remarkable Fools in it. But it is no ſuch eaſie Matter to run down the Princi-

ples

ples of Vertue and Religion, they have ſtood the Shock of all the Sarcaſms and Reproaches of former Times; and there is ſtill nothing at the Bottom of all the Scorn and Contempt that is caſt upon them, but a *carnal* and *profane Temper of Mind*; which may bear them up for a while, but it will be ſure to end in everlaſting Confuſion; and then they will find what they were ſo unwilling to believe, *That to be carnally minded is Death.* Not a meer State of Inſenſibility, but the worſt kind of Death; A Death of perpetual Horrour and Torment; A Death without the Power of Dying, and yet with a perpetual Deſire of it; A Death whoſe Sting can never be taken out; and whoſe Terror is ſaid to be as *everlaſting* as the Joys of Heaven. And ſhall not the Apprehenſion of ſuch a *Death*, as this, ſo dreadfull, ſo unavoidable, ſo inſupportable, make the greateſt Sinners to tremble, and be confounded at the Apprehenſion of it? And, if once ſuch Thoughts break into their Minds, farewell then to all the imaginary Pleaſure and Satisfaction of a carnal Mind; for it muſt ſink it into the *Confuſion* if not the *Deſpair* of Hell.

(2.) But

(2.) But I have hitherto repreſented the Diſadvantages of one ſide; but are there not ſuch on the other too? Some are too apt to think a *ſpiritual Mind* to be nothing but a diſorder'd Fancy, and melancholy Imaginations of inviſible things. If this were all, it were ſo far from being *Life and Peace*, that there could be no real Satisfaction about it. But a *ſpiritual Mind* is truly the moſt deſirable thing we are capable of in this World. For, it is the beſt Improvement of our Minds, which are *Spiritual*. It is, the purging and refining them from the Droſs and Corruption which debaſed them. It is, the advancing them towards the Divine Nature, by a gradual Participation of it. It is, the raiſing them above the carnal Delights, and the ſollicitous Cares and perplexing Fears of this World; and fitting them for a perpetual Converſation with Divine and Spiritual Objects.

And what then can be more agreeable to the beſt Part of our ſelves here, than to have a Mind ſo diſengaged from this World and ſo fit for a better? So that we may be content to take a view of the Worſt which can be ſuppoſed as to Diſadvantage here, which

is,

is, that good Men may be under *unequal Circumstances* as to their Condition in this Life; that is, when the regarding another World more than this, may make their outward Condition more uneasie here, than it might have been, if they had follow'd only the Dictates of a *carnal Mind*.

There are two sorts of Troubles we are to expect in this World, (1.) Such as we bring upon our selves by our own Acts: (2.) Such as are common to all Mankind: In both these the spiritual Mind hath the Advantage.

(1.) As to such which Men bring upon themselves. Let this be supposed; as it ought to be, when God pleases among Christians, *who are to follow Christ in taking up his Cross*: Is there any thing in this, which overthrows the Advantage of a *spiritual Mind* above a *carnal*? Can a *carnal Mind* secure Men from Pains and Diseases, from Losses and Disappointments? Nay doth not the Pursuit of carnal Pleasures bring more Troubles upon Men in this Life, than the Case of Persecution doth upon the best Christians? If the loathsome Diseases, the reproachfull and untimely Deaths, which of all things ought to be most

most avoided, by such who believe no Life after this, be compared with the Pains and Martyrdoms of those who have suffer'd for their Religion, these will appear to be far more eligible than the other, because the Mind hath far greater Satisfaction under them, and a certain Expectation of an infinite Reward to follow upon them. Whereas the other can have no Comfort in looking back on what they have done, or forward in what they are to expect. For they have destroy'd their own Happiness and hasten'd that upon themselves which they account their only Misery.

(2.) As to the common Calamities of Life, which none can prevent or avoid, the *Spiritual Mind* hath very much the Advantage of the *carnal*; for the one fills them with inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, which of all things carry Men best through the Troubles of Life; being joyned with Patience, Humility, Self-denial, and Submission to the Will of God; which are all the genuine Effects of a *Spiritual Mind*; but a *carnal Mind* is froward and impatient, uneasie to it self and to all about it, and this makes every Pain and

Trou-

Trouble to be much greater than it would have been; like the Aſs in the Fable: Which lay down in the Water with his Burthen of Wool and ſo made it heavier than before.

There were two things the philoſophical Men of Pleaſure ſought to comfort themſelves by, under the unavoidable Troubles of Life; which the *ſpiritual Mind* hath far greater Advantages than any of them had, as to both of them; and theſe are *Reflection* and *Expectation.*

(1.) *Reflection.* When *Epicurus* was in his laſt Agonies under the Stone, what a miſerable way was it for him to go about to comfort himſelf, by reflecting upon his *Atoms* and his *Maxims*, his imaginary Notion of the Happineſs of Life conſiſting in Pleaſure, when his Life was ſo near being ended by exceſſive Pain? But a good Man that hath ſincerely endeavour'd *to ſerve God in his Generation*, and to do all the good he could, and to promote the Intereſts of Religion and Vertue in the World, may in the Midſt of many Failings and Infirmities, look back with comfort on the Courſe of his former Life, and by the Peace of a good Conſcience may injoy

Epicurus Hermacho. *V.*

Ciceron. *de Finibus, l.* 2. *c.* 30.

injoy inward Satisfaction under such Pains and Distempers, which make Life uneasie and Death more welcome, as it is a Passage to a far better State. And that is the next thing.

(2.) *Expectation.* It was a sorrowfull Expectation which *Epicurus* supported himself with, when he was in the Prospect of Death; which was no more, than that the subtle Atoms which made up his Soul, would soon be scatter'd and dispersed, he knew not where, and then he should be, as if he had never been. But what Comfort is there in such a *Dissolution?* Men that have deserved it, may heartily wish it; but they have deserved something worse, and that they must expect. For, the just and holy *God*, will certainly call them to an Account for all their Vices and Follies; and *it is a fearfull thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; and what a miserable Case are those in, who have nothing to *look for but Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall consume the Adversaries* of God and Religion?

Heb. 10. 31.

27.

But, O the blessed Hope and joyfull Expectation that attends a *Spiritual Mind!* Especially when it is enliven'd and

and assisted by the powerfull Influences of Divine Grace. For without that, even good Men may be liable to some Dejections and Fears as to another World, from the Vastness of the Change, the Sense of their Failings, the Weakness of their Minds, and Mistrust of their own Fitness for Heaven; but so great is the Goodness and Mercy of God towards them that sincerely love and fear him, that he always makes their Passage safe, though it be not so triumphant. And although *the Valley of the Shadow of Death* may seem gloomy and uncomfortable at a Distance; yet when *God* is pleased to conduct his Servants through it, he makes it a happy Passage into a State of a glorious Immortality and everlasting *Life and Peace*. To which God, &c.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITE-HALL,

ON

Chriſtmaſs-Day, 1693.

St. John III. 17.

For God ſent not his Son into the World to condemn the World; but that the World through him might be ſaved.

THeſe words are part of the Goſpel written by St. *John*, wherein he doth not only fill up the Hiſtory of our Saviour with many particular Diſ-

Diſcourſes omitted by the other Evangeliſts, but the whole ſeems to be penned in another Strain and with ſome different Purpoſe and Deſign. It's true, that they all agree in the ſame general End of Writing which St. *John* mentions, *viz. That we might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his Name*; but they make uſe of ſeveral Methods, as moſt agreeable to the Circumſtances of the Time and Place and Occaſion of their Writing. St. *Matthew* wrote his Goſpel for the ſake of the *Jews*; and therefore he begins with the *Genealogy* of *Jeſus Chriſt* from *Abraham*, and ſhews that the Prophecies were accompliſhed in him, and how *he came not to deſtroy the Law but to fulfill it*, and that his Miracles and Doctrine were ſufficient to convince them that he was the promiſed *Meſſias*. St. *Mark* wrote only a ſummary Account of the moſt material Paſſages relating to the Perſon and Doctrine of Chriſt for the ſake of the *Gentiles*. St. *Luke* takes a larger Compaſs, and puts things into an exacter Order of Time, as himſelf tells us, and adds many Circumſtances relating to the Birth of Chriſt, and the ge-

ch. 20. 31.

ch. 1. 3.

neral Advantage to Mankind by his
a. 32. coming; that he was to be *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his People Iſrael.* St. *John* ſucceeding the reſt, found two great things which gave him occaſion of writing his Goſpel;

1. The perverting the Doctrine of Chriſt by the *Ebionites* and *Cerinthians*, who pretended to give great Honour to Chriſt as an excellent Perſon both for Wiſdom and Holineſs, but yet ſo that he was but a *meer Man*, to whom God, upon his Baptiſm, had given extraordinary Gifts and Aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit.

2. The other was, that the Goſpel which was deſigned for the Univerſal good of the World met with ſuch cold Reception and Entertainment from it.
ch. 1. 11. *He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him*
12. *not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

What could be more uneaſie to ſo true a lover of Chriſt as St. *John* was, than that he lived to ſee his Doctrine perverted, and his Deſign in ſo great a Meaſure rendred ineffectual? And therefore in the writing of this Goſpel.

1. He

1. He begins after another manner; and in a very ſhort, ſignificant and lofty Style, he ſets forth his Eternal Being and Godhead. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* And as the *Eternal Power and Godhead were underſtood by the things that were made*, as St. *Paul* ſaith, ſo he adds, *that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Which is as certain an Argument of the Divinity of Chriſt, as there is of the Being of God from the Creation of the World. Rom. 1. 20. ver. 3.

2. As to the other Point; it was indeed a ſad and amazing Conſideration, that the wonderfull *Love of God in ſending his Son into the World* ſhould have ſo little Effect upon the Generality of thoſe to whom he was ſent and his Doctrine preached; but the Apoſtle contents himſelf with theſe two Accounts of it;

1. That it was far from being God's Intention or Deſign in ſending his Son to make Men's condition worſe and more deſperate; *For God ſent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be ſaved.*

2. But it might be preſently objected, That if this were God's Intention, the World would not have receiv'd ſo little Benefit by it, but according to the Terms of Salvation propoſed by the Goſpel ſo few will have advantage by it; therefore the Evangeliſt adds, that if Men did periſh they muſt thank themſelves for it; *For, this is the Condemnation that light is come into the World, and Men loved darkneſs rather than light becauſe their deeds were evil*, v. 19.

So that there are two things which deſerve our Conſideration.

I. The wonderfull Condeſcenſion and gracious Intention of God *in ſending his Son into the World.*

II. The true Reaſon why ſo many miſcarry, as to their Salvation notwithſtanding; *viz.* their own Wickedneſs and Folly.

1. The former of theſe, is that, which upon this Day we have particular Reaſon to take notice of; not in a ſlight ſuperficial Manner, (as though an Annual Commemoration of it were all that God expected from us,) but our Minds and Souls ought to be poſſeſſed with

with a deep and humble Senſe of ſo great, ſo undeſerved, ſo aſtoniſhing a Condeſcenſion of God to Mankind. And the more we think and conſider of it, the more amazing and ſurprizing it muſt appear to us: For when the Pſalmiſt thought but of God's Providence towards Mankind, he could not but break out into that Expreſſion, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindfull of him, and the Son of Man, that thou ſo regardeſt him! What is Man* indeed! a Maſs of Vanity and Diſorder; weak in his Judgment, wilfull in his Paſſions; uncertain in his beſt Reſolutions, violent in his worſt Inclinations; ſtrangely bent upon what tends to his Ruine, and hardly brought to underſtand and purſue his trueſt Intereſt! What is ſuch a Creature as this, that a God infinitely Wiſe and Powerfull, far above our Thoughts as well as our Services, ſhould concern himſelf about the low and trifling Affairs of Mankind! But ſuch is the Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of God, that he humbles himſelf ſo far, as not only to behold, but to govern the things that are done upon Earth. Pſal. 8. 4. 144. 3.

But *what is Man that he ſhould viſit him!* Not with the meer common De-

monſtrations of his Kindneſs, which he affords to other Creatures; but that when Mankind had ſo far degenerated and fallen off from God by their Sins, that they deſerved to be for ever caſt off and forgotten by him; that then God ſhould viſit him by *ſending his Son into the World that the World through him might be ſaved*; this is ſo far above our Imaginations as well as Deſerts, that it ſeems to be the moſt colourable Pretence for Infidelity, that it is too great a thing for Mankind to believe.

But I am ſenſible, that in this ſceptical and unbelieving Age, there is ſuch a Humour of caviling againſt Matters of Revelation, eſpecially this fundamental Article of it, that it would ſeem as if we were afraid to look their Objections in the Face, if we take no notice of them; and on the other ſide, to inſiſt too much upon them, were to make them appear much more conſiderable than they are. Therefore I ſhall paſs over all the trifling and impertinent Talk of ſuch Men (which is not whiſpered in Corners, but I am afraid is become a Matter of too common and publick Diſcourſe) and I ſhall ſingle out that which ſeems to have the

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greateſt Weight in it; *viz.* Suppoſe God ſhould have an Intention to offer Terms of Salvation to Mankind, yet what need was there that *the Son of God* ſhould *come into the World* for that End? Had not God eaſier Methods of doing it than by the *Incarnation and Crucifixion of his Son?* Is it not more credible, that God ſhould forgive Sins without any Atonement, than that he ſhould *ſend his Son* to be a Sacrifice of Propitiation to himſelf? Is it not enough for us to believe all the Principles of Natural Religion to be true; for we own a God, and Providence, and a Life to come, and Rewards and Puniſhments of Mankind according to the Nature of their Actions; but why ſhould our Faith be cramp'd by ſuch incredible *Myſteries* as theſe, concerning *the Son of God's coming into the World*; in ſuch a Manner as the *Evangeliſts* deſcribe it: This is ſo far from being a kindneſs to the World, that it makes the Condition of Salvation ſo much harder, if we muſt believe things which ſeem ſo impoſſible to us, and ſo hard to be reconciled to the *Natural Principles* of *Reaſon* and *Religion.*

I ſhall not diſpute it with ſuch Men whether theſe late Pretenders to *Natural Religion* have at the bottom any real Kindneſs for the Principles of it, or not; I am willing to hope the beſt, and that it is a meer Diſſatisfaction in them as to our revealed Religion; and that this pretended Zeal for *Natural Religion* is little more than a meer Sham and Diſguiſe to avoid a more odious Imputation. But let it be as great and real as they pretend, what I at preſent undertake, is to make it appear, *That none who do embrace the Principles of Natural Religion can have any Reaſon to reject the Chriſtian, even as to this Article of God's ſending his Son into the World*, which they ſeem moſt to ſtumble at.

I ſhall not go about to ſhew, how the Chriſtian Religion not only ſuppoſes, but improves, refines, eſtabliſhes and enforces the moſt noted and allowed Principles of Natural Religion, as to the Being of God and Providence; the moſt agreeable way of Worſhip; the Nature and Kinds of Moral Duties, the Rewards and Puniſhments of another World, ſince no one of common Senſe can deny that the Chriſtian Religion is very exact and particular in theſe

theſe things above any other Inſtitution in the World.

And therefore I cannot, but in paſſing, take notice, that I do not remember any one Inſtitution in the World with reſpect to Religion, except that which we have by Revelation, which hath not ſome notorious Blunders in it, as to the Principles of Natural Religion and Vertue; and therefore they have far leſs Reaſon to quarrel with Chriſtianity than any other Religion (if their quarrel were not really againſt all, as I fear it is;) Let them look abroad over the Unchriſtian World; and they will find ſuch fooliſh Notions, ſuch vain Superſtitions, ſuch incoherent Fables, ſuch immoral Practices allowed by their ſeveral Religions, as would make a conſidering Man wonder how the Notion of Religion could be ſo debaſed among Men. Let them look backward upon the Paſſages of elder Times, and they ſhall find either they ſet up falſe Gods with the true, or the falſe Worſhip of the true God; or a Worſhip diſagreeable to the Divine Nature by mean Repreſentations, or uncouth Sacrifices, or impure Rites; or elſe there were ſome horrible Flaws,

as to the common Principles of Morality, as to conjugal Society, or the Rights of Property, or the due Regard to the Preſervation of Mankind; or they give ſuch a pitifull Repreſentation of the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life; as if they had a Mind to have them look'd on as Fables, or deſpiſed as unworthy our regarding them above the preſent Pleaſures of Life. But I dare challenge the moſt cavilling Sceptick to find any juſt Fault with the Duties of Chriſtianity; for the Worſhip of God required therein, is pure, holy, ſpiritual, very agreeable to the Divine Nature and the common Reaſon of Mankind. The Moral Precepts of it are clear, weighty and comprehenſive. And thoſe who have delivered them to us, neither commend any Vice, nor ſink the Reputation of any Vertue; they never leſſen our Duties to God, or to one another; all the juſt Complaint is, that the Precepts are too ſtrict and ſevere, too good and too hard for Mankind to practiſe them. But is this an Objection againſt our Religion, or againſt Mankind? If they think that, let our Religion require what it will, the generality of the World will ſtill live

live and act like Brutes, and go againſt all Reaſon and Religion; how can we help it? But we hope the blame is not to be laid on Reaſon or Religion, that ſo great a part of Mankind are either Fools or Mad-men; *i. e.* either want Senſe to underſtand their Duty, or are reſolved not to practiſe it. Eſpecially conſidering, that the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, are ſet forth in the Goſpel, with that Clearneſs, that Force, that Authority, that if any thing of that Nature would work upon Mankind, theſe muſt.

But all theſe things I paſs over, and come to that which I propoſed as my chief Deſign, which is to prove, *That none who truly believe the Principles of Natural Religion, can have any Reaſon to reject this fundamental Article of it, as to God's ſending his Son into the World.* And that upon two Accounts.

I. That the *Principles* of *Natural Religion* make this Deſign appear very credible, or fit to be believed by Men of Senſe and Underſtanding.

II. That the *Principles* on which this fundamental Article of our *Revealed Religion* ſtands, afford ſufficient Evidence

dence to prove it true; and therefore that we are bound to believe it.

As to the former, the *Grounds* or *Principles* which I go upon, are these:

I. *That the great End of Christ's coming into the World*, viz. *the Salvation of Mankind, is most agreeable to the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God.* No one who believes a God, can deny him to be of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; for the very same Reasons which move Men to believe a God, do convince them that he must be of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, seeing the strongest Evidences to prove his Being are from the Instances of them in the World.

These being then supposed, as essential and inseparable Attributes of the Divine Nature; we are to consider what End with respect to Mankind is most agreeable to these to carry on; and we must suppose Mankind to be made up of Soul and Body, which are capable of Pleasures and Satisfaction, both in this World and another: But our Souls are of an immortal Nature, that will subsist in Happiness or Misery after

after this Life, otherwiſe the Rewards and Puniſhments of another World ſignifie nothing; the Queſtion then is (if it can be made a Queſtion) Whether it be more agreeable to the infinite Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God to provide for the Well-being of Mankind in ſuch a low and gloomy Region, as this Earth is, or to advance them into a far better Place, and better Company, and more Noble and Divine Delights, and thoſe not depending on a fading, drooping, dying Life, but on the perpetual Enjoyment of a complete Happineſs both of Soul and Body. No one that ever dares to think or conſider of theſe things, can believe there is any Compariſon between them; ſo that the Salvation tendred by the Goſpel, is the moſt agreeable End which the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God could carry on for the Benefit of Mankind.

But why ſhould Mankind flatter themſelves with the Hopes or Expectation of a Happineſs ſo far above what they can pretend to deſerve?

There were ſome Grounds for ſuch an Objection as this; if we ſuppoſed the Rewards of another Life to come from any other Fountain than the infinite

nite Goodneſs of God towards thoſe who ſincerely love him and endeavour to pleaſe him; although with many Failings and Imperfections. But this is the only *Hypotheſis*, which we maintain to be the Chriſtian Doctrine: And what is there in it, which is repugnant to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God? What was it but infinite Goodneſs which gave a Being to the World at firſt, and hath preſerved it ever ſince, and made it ſo uſefull and beneficial to Mankind? What is it, but infinite Goodneſs that ſuffers us to live and enjoy ſo may Comforts of Life, after ſo many great and continual Provocations? If we were to argue from our Deſerts, it were impoſſible for us to juſtifie the wonderfull Patience and Long-ſuffering of God towards the ſinfull Race of Mankind; for we are certain, that they have long ſince deſerved to be cut off from the Face of the Earth? If we conſider the Juſtice and Holineſs of God, whereby he is daily provoked to puniſh Offenders, and the Power he hath to execute his Juſtice in a Moment, without any oppoſite Power to controll or reſiſt him; we have Reaſon to be aſtoniſhed at the wonderfull Patience and

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Forbearance of God, of which we every day ſee ſo large Experience. But this is not all; he doth not only ſuffer them to live, but often makes their Condition eaſie and proſperous as to this World, having Health, Riches and Honour, and the Hopes of their Poſterity, enjoying the ſame things after them. Now theſe to ſuch, who do not believe or value another Life, are the greateſt things God can do to their Satisfaction. But if they can allow ſo much Goodneſs in God towards thoſe who continually offend him; why ſhould they queſtion greater Inſtances of it towards thoſe that endeavour to pleaſe him? I do not mean as to this World, but as to another which they value far before it; for if they do not, they have no Reaſon to expect any Happineſs in it: Why then ſhould it be thought more unreaſonable for God to beſtow the Happineſs of another Life, on thoſe who eſteem and chooſe it, than to give the good things of this Life to thoſe who love and admire it? I do not ſay, the Wiſdom is equal in the Choice; but the Goodneſs of God is wonderfull in both. And there can be no imaginable Ground to ſuſpect, that God ſhould be

be really leſs kind to thoſe who love him beſt. It is a vain thing to talk of thoſe *being ſaved by Chriſt's coming into the World*, who do not heartily love God and keep his Commandments; for the whole Deſign of the Goſpel is to perſwade us to one in order to the other; and therefore it is not a well-grounded Hope, but a fond Imagination for any to expect Salvation by Chriſt on any other Terms. If we then take in the whole *Hypotheſis* or true Scheme of Chriſtianity together, it is no other than that *God ſent his Son into the World, that the World through him might be ſaved*; not by continuing in the ſinfull Practices of this World, which St. *John* 1 Joh. 1. 16. calls *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; but by ſubduing and mortifying all diſorderly Paſſions do prepare themſelves for a better State. Now, if there be in our Minds a firm Perſwaſion of the infinite Goodneſs of God, of which we are convinced by meer Natural Reaſon; why ſhould it be thought hard to believe, that God ſhould take care of ſo great and good an End, as the Eternal Salvation of thoſe who truly love and obey him.

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II. The next Principle agreeable to Natural Reaſon and Religion is, *That no ſuch thing as Salvation or Happineſs in a future State can be expected without the particular Favour of God.* For, all who do own Natural Religion, muſt agree that the Soul of Man is an immortal thinking Being; and therefore its Happineſs muſt conſiſt in ſuch a ſort of thinking, as carries the greateſt Pleaſure and Satisfaction along with it. Let us think with our ſelves what a Soul ſeparate from the Body can do, to make it ſelf happy: Here it was intangled, corrupted, and therefore apt to be deceived by the falſe Appearances of things, which glide through the Senſes and leave too laſting Impreſſions on the Mind; and thereby it comes to miſtake Shews for Subſtance, and meer Colours for Realities. But this is a Miſtake ſo common and ſo fatal to Mankind, that very few are throughly undeceived in this World; for one way or other they are apt to flatter themſelves with ſome pleaſing Miſtakes and delightfull Errors of Life. But aſſoon as the Soul is diſlodged from this cloudy Manſion in the Body, all things will

then appear, not as by an uncertain Sky-light in a dark Room, but in an open and distinct View, and then it will be impossible to be any longer deceived by false Representations of things. What then can be conceived sufficient to entertain and please the Mind? Will it be the Reflection on the past Pleasures of the Body? No certainly; for those cannot bear a severe Reflection now; and the very thoughts of them make Men's minds very uneasie; for the most tempting Pleasures of Sin leave no gratefull Relish behind them. How then should the Mind bear up it self in another State, when its Reflections must be far more constant and severe? What then? Can the Mind lay it self asleep, and put it self into a State of unthinking? That were all one, as a kind of Self-annihilation if it be of a thinking Nature. There is a State of *unthinking* in this World, which is too common; when the Mind is as it were overwhelmed and stifled with Feathers; I mean is so taken up with trifling and vain Imaginations, as hardly give way to one serious Thought. But this is impossible in another State; and therefore nothing but what will

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bear a moſt ſtrict and ſevere Scrutiny can give any Support or Comfort to the Mind then. It muſt be true and real good to create any Satisfaction; it muſt be durable and laſting to keep it up; it muſt be complete and perfect to anſwer all the juſt and reaſonable Deſires of an immortal Soul. And what can this be leſs than God himſelf? And therefore the Chriſtian Religion ſpeaks moſt agreeably to Natural Reaſon, when it ſtill ſuppoſes the Happineſs of another World to conſiſt in the Preſence and Enjoyment of God. For thoſe muſt have all that is deſirable, who enjoy the Favour of him who commands all things, and knows how to ſuit them to the greateſt Advantage to thoſe to whom he deſigns to ſhew his Favour.

And this Proſpect of another State, or of *the Salvation of Mankind by Chriſt's coming into the World*, is that which lets us into another View of all that relates to the Son of God's coming into the World: For if our Minds be poſſeſſed with great Apprehenſions of the Power and Greatneſs of the World; all that the Goſpel repreſents as to the manner of God's ſending his Son into the World,

his being born of an obſcure Virgin, being laid in the common Manger, being bred up in a private Place, having ſo mean Followers, meeting with ſo cold a Reception from his own People, and at laſt, being expoſed to an ignominious Death by them, looks very reproachfull and contemptible. But on the other ſide, if we could raiſe our Minds to ſuch Idea's of things here, as the glorious Spirits above have; and ſee how all things are eſteemed by them according to the Ends and Purpoſes they are deſigned for, we ſhould then perceive how admirably all theſe things were fitted for his great End; which was to wean Men's hearts from the Pomp and Vanities of this World and to prepare them for a better; and we ſhould then have quite another Opinion of theſe things: For as there is a certain Greatneſs, which is above all the formal Shews and affected Appearances of it, ſo when a great and noble Deſign is to be carried on, the true Meaſure of *Decorum* in that Caſe, is that which is moſt ſerviceable to the principal End. If a great Perſon had a Deſign to reſcue ſome near Relations out of Slavery, he would never go with a ſplen-

a ſplendid Equipage and a long Train of Attendance, which would but make his Perſon more gazed at and his Deſign leſs effectual. If he had intended to have reſcued them by force out of Captivity, it had been neceſſary to have had Power and Strength proportionable to his Deſign; but if it were only by Perſwaſion, then he muſt accommodate himſelf to ſuch Methods as were moſt likely to prevail.

The great End of the coming of Chriſt was to deliver the Souls of Men from a much worſe Captivity, *viz.* of their own ſinfull Paſſions and the Devil's Tyranny by their means; but he did not come in a way of Violence to break open the Priſon-doors and in an inſtant to knock off their Fetters and bid them be free; but he makes uſe of all the gentle and effectual Methods of Perſwaſion, not only by his Words but by his own Example; that they might learn by him to deſpiſe this World, who had ſo little in it, and to prepare for that from whence he came, where their Happineſs ſhould be unconceivable and without End.

III. The third Principle is, *That no ſuch particular Favour of God is to be expected, as long as his Diſpleaſure is ſo juſt againſt Mankind for Sin, and no effectual Means uſed to remove it.* The truth is, the whole Scheme of the Goſpel turns upon this Point, whether God be really diſpleaſed with Mankind for their Sins, ſo as to need a Reconciliation: For, if all that the Scripture ſo often expreſſes concerning the *Wrath and Diſpleaſure of God* againſt Mankind for Sin, be only figurative and hyperbolical Expreſſions, then the whole Deſign of the Goſpel muſt be given up as a meer Scheme; for, if God be not really diſpleaſed, there is no need of Reconciliation; if no need of that, then there can be no need of Chriſt's coming to reconcile us to God; and if he did not come for that End, we have no Reaſon to believe the Scripture, which affirms it over and over. And I do not think any ſtronger Argument can be brought to prove a thing, than that the moſt emphatical Expreſſions are ſo often applied to that purpoſe, by ſuch Perſons who uſed all Sincerity and Plainneſs. So that this matter as to the

the Scripture is clear, if any thing can be made ſo; and if nothing can, I cannot ſee how it is poſſible to have a written Rule of Faith; ſince all Writings are capable by Ambiguity of Words and Phraſes, by the different Uſe of Particles and Tranſpoſition of Letters and Syllables, of very different Interpretations.

But this is not my preſent Buſineſs, which is rather to conſider the Natural Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind as to this matter. We cannot in Reaſon ſuppoſe any ſuch Paſſion in an infinitely perfect being, as that which we call *Wrath and Anger* in Men. For that is a violent Perturbation ariſing from Surpriſe and Indignation; but there can be no Diſorder or Surpriſe in a Being of infinite Wiſdom. Therefore *Wrath in God* muſt ſuppoſe two Things.

1. A juſt Cauſe of Diſpleaſure given by us.

2. Such a juſt Diſpleaſure following upon it as will end in the ſevere Puniſhment of Offenders if it be not removed.

Now, whether there be a juſt Cauſe of Diſpleaſure or not, muſt depend upon the Natural Differences of Good

and Evil. And it is impoſſible that any one who exerciſes his Reaſon, can judge amiſs in this Matter. Not, that all the Differences of Good and Evil are equally clear, for all Propoſitions in Mathematicks are not ſo; but it is ſufficient to our Purpoſe, that the general Principles are ſo; and the greater Inſtances; ſo that no Man can think that he acts as much according to Reaſon in one as the other. And, can any one of common Senſe imagine God to be as well pleaſed with him who blaſphemes his Name, and deſpiſes his Service, and hates Religion, as with one that fears and Honours him, and endeavours to pleaſe him? Can he be as well pleaſed with him, that aſſaſſines his Parents, as with him that obeys them? With him that robs and defrauds his Neighbour, as with him that relieves him in his Neceſſities? With him who ſubdues his diſorderly Paſſions, as with him that gives way to them? With him who is cruel, inhuman and perfidious, as with him that is faithfull and juſt and compaſſionate? Theſe are but ſome of the Inſtances of the Differences of Good and Evil, but they are ſo plain and notorious, that a Man muſt renounce

renounce the common Principles of Humanity, who doth not own them. And to ſay there are no ſuch Differences, becauſe there have been Miſtakes and Diſputes about ſome things accounted Good and Evil, is as abſurd, as to ſay, there is no Difference between Day and Night, becauſe in the Twilight it is hard to diſtinguiſh them. But if there be ſuch a real Difference in the Nature of Humane Actions, and God be a ſtrict obſerver of them, he being a God of infinite Holineſs and Juſtice, cannot but be offended with Mankind's wilfull Omiſſion of what they know to be good, and Commiſſion of what they know to be evil.

But here we muſt diſtinguiſh between God's Diſpleaſure againſt the Actions and againſt the Perſons who commit them. The former is a neceſſary Conſequent upon the Evil of Sin, and can never be removed, for God is irreconcileable to Sin. But thoſe who commit Sin are his Creatures; and therefore capable of Mercy and Forgiveneſs. There is always a Deſert of Puniſhment following upon Sin; but there is no inſeparable Connection between the Sin and the Puniſhment; for

for the great and wise Governour of the World acts not by Necessity of Nature in punishing Sinners, but by the Methods of Wisdom and Justice. And if the saving of Sinners upon their Repentance can be made agreeable to these, such is the Mercy and Goodness of God to his Creatures, that there is great Reason to hope for a Reconciliation. For, although God be displeased, he is not implacable; although he be justly provoked to punish Sinners, yet there is no absolute Necessity that he should; nor any irreversible Decree that he will do it; and therefore notwithstanding this Displeasure of God, there is a way still left open for Reconciliation which leads to the next.

IV. The fourth Principle is, *That if God be thus displeased with the Sins of Mankind, and yet there is a Possibility of Reconciliation between God and them, he alone is the most proper and competent Judge, on what Terms this Reconciliation may be obtained.* For being both the offended Party and the supreme Governour, he hath the sole Right on both Accounts of fixing those Terms and Conditions, upon which he will forgive

give Sins, and receive the Offenders into Favour. It is a vain thing for any to argue from one Attribute of God against another. Some are apt to flatter themſelves that God will eaſily forgive Sins, becauſe he is mercifull, but they ought to conſider that he is juſt and holy as well as mercifull; and there is as much ground to fear that he will not forgive becauſe he is juſt; as there can be to hope that he will becauſe he is mercifull. And thus it is impoſſible for a conſidering Man to ſatisfie his own Mind as to God's forgiving his Sins; unleſs he be ſome way aſſured from himſelf that he will do it. And therefore a particular Revelation in this Caſe muſt be made, if God deſigns to bring Men to Repentance by the Hopes of Forgiveneſs. But meer Repentance can never make any ſatisfaction to God for the Breach of his Laws. Suppoſe a Sinner come to himſelf and is heartily ſorry that he hath offended God ſo many ways, and with ſuch aggravating Circumſtances as he hath done; and now reſolves in the Anguiſh of his Soul never more to return to the Practice of them; This no doubt, is far more pleaſing to God, than going

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ing on to offend ſtill; but all this is no more than a Man in juſtice to God and to himſelf is bound to do; for he is bound to vindicate the Honour of God's Laws, and to condemn himſelf for his own Folly, and to return no more to the Practice of it. But what amends is made by all this, for the infinite Diſhonour which hath been done to God and his Laws by the Violation of them? The Courts of Juſtice among Men take no Notice of the Malefactor's Repentance; however he be affected, the Law muſt be obſerved, and Offenders puniſhed. How then can any Perſons be aſſured from meer Natural Reaſon, that God will not be as tender of the Honour and Juſtice of his Laws, as Mankind are allowed to be without any Imputation of Cruelty or Injuſtice?

If God ſhould be exact in puniſhing Offenders, who could complain? For who can plead *Not-Guilty* before his Maker? And when a Man's own Conſcience condemns him that he hath deſerved Puniſhment, what Reaſon can he have from himſelf not to expect it? And if he doth juſtly expect to be puniſhed, what reaſon can he have to hope

hope for Forgiveneſs? Since he knows that he deſerves to be puniſhed, and therefore can never deſerve to be forgiven. It muſt be therefore a free Act of Grace and Mercy in God to forgive even penitent Sinners; and upon what Terms and in what Manner he will do it depends wholly upon his own Good-will. He may forgive Sins if he pleaſes, and it is agreeable to his Nature to do it, if Sinners do repent and forſake their Sins; but whether God hath actually made known to us the way of Reconciliation cannot be known by any Principles of Nature; becauſe it is a Matter of Fact and muſt have ſuch Proof as a thing of that Nature is capable of.

II. Having thus ſhewed, how ſtrongly the Principles of Natural Religion do make way for entertaining this Point of the Chriſtian Doctrine, as to *God's ſending his Son into the World* in order to our Reconciliation with him and our Salvation by him; it remains now to ſhew how juſtly God doth require the Belief of it from us as true; for the next words tells us, *That he that believeth on him is not condemned*;

ned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, v. 18.

This, some may say, is very hard Doctrine; for they believe as much as they can; and if they can believe no more it is no fault; for no Man can be bound to believe more than he can. I do not question but *Nicodemus* (to whom these words are generally supposed to be spoken by our Saviour) thought he had gone a great way, when he used those words to Christ, *v. 2. Rabbi we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do these Miracles that thou dost except God be with him.* i. e. He was willing to believe him some great Prophet whom God had sent; and this was a fair step for *a Ruler among the Jews*, who were generally very unreasonable Unbelievers. But Christ tells him plainly this would not do; for unless he believed him to be *the only begotten Son of God*, he could not be saved. And this is the great Point, *That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting*

ing life, v. 16. Not, as though meer believing this were ſufficient (for this carries a great many other things along with it) but that ſince God had ſent *his only begotten Son* into the World upon ſuch a Meſſage, he did expect that he ſhould be received and entertained as ſuch upon their utmoſt Peril.

But can we believe farther than we have Reaſon to believe? No; God doth not expect it from us, provided that with ſincere and impartial Minds we ſet our ſelves to conſider and weigh the Evidence and with great Humility beg the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace, without which God may juſtly leave us to our Unbelief.

It would be too large a Subject now to lay open the ſeveral Arguments to prove that it is as evident, as a Matter of Fact can be made to us, that *God did ſend his Son that the World through him might be ſaved*; Therefore I ſhall only mention theſe two things.

1. That if the Matters of Fact are true concerning the Hiſtory of *Chriſt's coming*, as related by the Evangeliſts, there can be no Reaſon to doubt his being *the Son of God*. For he that was

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the most exact Pattern of Humility and Self-denial, not only frequently assumes this Title to himself, and his most intimate Disciples affirm it of him; but God himself gave the most ample and convincing Testimony to it; by his miraculous Birth; and a Voice from Heaven to that Purpose at his Baptism; by a long Train and Series of publick and usefull Miracles to attest the Truth of his Doctrine; by his Resurrection from the Dead and Ascension into Heaven, and wonderfull Effusion of the Holy Ghost, with the strange Effects which followed it; so that no one who doth believe these things to be true can have any ground to say that he cannot believe Christ to be the Son of God.

2. That if these Matters of Fact are not to be believed as true we cannot be bound to believe any thing but what we see our selves. For the Distance of Time and Place are equal in this Case; and no other Matters of Fact are so well attested as these are. And so, as the Apostle saith of Christ's Resurrection, *If he be not risen our Faith is vain*; so in this Case I say if there be not Reason to believe these things *all Faith is vain.* For no other Matters of Fact, which

which we ſhould be accounted Fools for not believing, have had ſuch a ſort of Teſtimony which theſe have had. For theſe things were not conveyed by a ſilent Tradition for ſome time till the chief Parties were dead who could either prove or diſprove them; but they were publick and expoſed to all Manner of Examination; They were not deliver'd by one or two, who were truſted with a Secret, but openly avowed by a great Number of competent Witneſſes, who were preſent; and none of them could be brought by the greateſt Sufferings to deny, or falſify, or conceal any Part of their Evidence; that when theſe things had been thus delivered by thoſe who ſaw them, who were moſt remarkable for their Innocency and Integrity, in the next Ages they were examined and enquired into by Men of Sagacity and Learning, who upon the ſtricteſt Search found no Reaſon to ſuſpect their Teſtimony; and therefore heartily embraced and defended the Chriſtian Faith. And from thence they have been conveyed down to us; not by an uncertain Oral Tradition, which can hardly hold the ſame from one End of the Town to another;

but by unqueſtionable Writings; of ſuch Authority, that the Chriſtians would rather die than deliver up their Books. And in theſe are all thoſe Circumſtances contained, which we are bound to believe as Chriſtians; among which this is one of the Chief, *that God ſent his Son into the World for the Salvation of Mankind.*

To ſumm up all; I deſire thoſe who after all this pretend that they are willing to believe as much as they can, and thoſe who are liable to any Suggeſtions of Infidelity, to conſider ſeriouſly with themſelves, whether there can be a greater and more noble Deſign, more becoming the Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs of God to carry on, than that of reſcuing Mankind out of a miſerable State, and putting them into a certain way of Eternal Happineſs? Whether ſuch a Deſign muſt not be diſcovered in ſome particular Age of the World, with all the Circumſtances relating to it? Whether that Age were not the fitteſt of all others, wherein the moſt remarkable Prophecies were to be accompliſhed, as to the Coming of the *Meſſias*, while the ſecond Temple was ſtanding? Whether the Difficulties as to hu-

humane Teſtimonies be not equal to all Ages and Things? Whether becauſe it is poſſible for all Men to deceive, it be reaſonable to inferr that all Men are deceived; and that there is nothing but Illuſion and Impoſture in the World; and that all Men lye and deceive for the ſake of lying and deceiving? But if there be a Difference to be made between Men and between Teſtimonies; then we are to examine the different Characters of Truth and Falſhood and give our Aſſent according to them. And if after the ſevereſt Examination we do not find ſufficient Reaſon to believe *that God ſent his Son into the World for the Salvation of Mankind*, upon ſuch Teſtimonies as are given of it, we muſt conclude all Mankind to be made up of Fraud and Impoſture; and that there is no ſuch thing as Sincerity and Honeſty in the World; or that if there be, it is not poſſible for others to diſcern it. Which are ſuch fatal Reproaches upon humane Nature, that no one who pretends to any Regard to it can be guilty of. For if they be Univerſally true, they muſt condemn themſelves; if not, we muſt ſee ſome very particular Reaſon why we ſhould not rather

think them deceived, than fix ſuch an indelible Blot upon the Reputation of Mankind. And ſurely it is a great Advantage to the Truth of Religion to find, that it cannot be overthrown but by ſuch Methods, as equally overturn all Truth and Certainty, and that the Faith of Chriſtianity ſtands not only upon the ſame Bottom with the common Faith of Mankind. But if we reject ſuch Aſſurance as is offer'd us for the Faith of the Goſpel, our Infidelity cannot be the Effect of Reaſon and Argument, but of a cauſeleſs Suſpicion and unreaſonable Miſtruſt of the beſt Part of Mankind. Who have moſt firmly believed the Truth of theſe things, and have led the moſt holy and exemplary Lives in hopes of a Bleſſed Immortality. And if the Teſtimony of any Perſons deſerves to be taken before others, it muſt be of ſuch who could have no Deſign upon this World, but were reſolved by Faith and Patience to prepare for a better.

To conclude. For us who believe and own the Truth of this great and fundamental Article of the Chriſtian Faith, we have ſomething elſe to do than meerly

meerly to vindicate and aſſert it. This at ſome times is more neceſſary than at others; and I heartily wiſh this were none of them. I am willing to hope the beſt of all who in ſuch an Age of Infidelity have the Courage and Zeal to own the Faith of this Day; *viz. That God ſent his Son into the World in order to the making us for ever happy.* And I hope none who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians this Day will ever be diſcouraged by the Mocks and Flouts of Infidels, ſo as to let go the Anchor of their Hope, or miſtruſt the Foundation of their Faith. It is as great a Piece of Wiſdom to know when to believe, as when not to believe; and it is as certain an Argument of a weak Mind to be always doubting, as to be over-forward in believing: For the Soil muſt be very bad that can bear no Foundation. But withall let us not flatter our ſelves only that we have a better Faith than others. For how miſerable will our Caſe be, if we have nothing but a ſuperficial Faith; and a ſort of Anniverſary Devotion. We can never thank God too much for the Bleſſing of this Day; but God expects ſomething more from us, than meerly the giving him

ſolemn Thanks once a Year for *ſending his Son into the World.* We muſt endeavour to anſwer the End of God's ſending him, *i.e. to ſave us* firſt *from our Sins*, and then *from the wrath to come.* This is the Method which God himſelf hath appointed, not barely from his own Will and Pleaſure, but from the neceſſary Order and Reaſon of Things. For, otherwiſe a Man might be rewarded for doing amiſs, and puniſhed for performing his Duty. If we therefore ever hope for any Benefit by this coming of Chriſt into the World, we muſt apply our Minds to conſider ſeriouſly on what Conditions we may reaſonably hope for Salvation by him. Can they think that Chriſt came to ſo little Purpoſe as to ſave Men in their Sins? If that were to be hoped, there had been no need of his coming; but it is a hard Work indeed to ſave us from them. The Guilt muſt be expiated, and the Power ſubdued; the former Chriſt hath done; but he expects, and with great Reaſon, that we ſhould *deny ungodly and worldly Luſts, and work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

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SERMON X.

CONCERNING

Sins of Omiſſion,

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITE-HALL,

ON

March 18th. 169¾. being *Midlent-Sunday.*

St. James IV. 17.

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.

ALthough our Apoſtle in this Epiſtle calls the Goſpel *the Law of Liberty*, yet to prevent any Miſconſtruction thereof, as though it allowed a *Liberty* a. 19.

to ſin, we no where find more ſtrict and ſevere Paſſages againſt it, than in this Epiſtle, both with reſpect to *Sins of Commiſſion*, and *Sins of Omiſſion*. As to *Sins of Commiſſion*, his Expreſſion ſeems hardly conſiſtent with the Grace
ℑ. 10. of the Goſpel; *For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.* Hath the Law of *Moſes* any thing more apt to terrifie the Conſciences of Men, if not to drive them into deſpair, than this? It is not, *If one breaks the whole Law*; then it had been no wonder *if he were guilty of all*, even under the Goſpel, which doth not take away the force of the Moral Law. But, *If he keep the whole Law; and yet offend in one Point; he is guilty of all.* How is this agreeable with the Equity of the Goſpel, to make a Breach of *one Part* to be a *violation* of the whole Law? Since he cannot keep the Law, and break it at the ſame time; and ſo far as he did keep it, he could not be guilty of the Breach of it; but, if *he offended but in one Point*, he muſt keep all the reſt. It is not enough to ſay, that the Chain of the whole is broken, and the Authority of the Law-giver contemned; for there is a great diffe-

difference between breaking a Chain, and breaking it all to Pieces; there is no ſuch Contempt in the Breach of one Command, as of all; and he that keeps all the reſt, ſeems to ſhew more regard to his Authority in keeping the other Parts of the Law, than Contempt in that wherein he offends. What then is the Apoſtle's meaning? It is, that the Goſpel doth not allow any wilfull Breach of the Law of God in any one kind or ſort whatſoever; as appears by the following words, *For he that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill; now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.* What is before ſaid, that *he is guilty of all*, is here explained, that *he is a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.* This cannot therefore be underſtood of any ſudden Act of Paſſion and Surpriſe, nor of any Failings as to the Manner of our Duties, but of a wilfull, deliberate Practice of ſome one known Sin, although the Perſon may be carefull to avoid many others; becauſe this is not conſiſtent with that Integrity of Mind, and that ſincere Regard to God and his Laws, which every good Chriſtian ought to have; and ſo being *guilty of*

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the whole Law, is to be underſtood with reſpect to the Favour of God; which can no more be expected where there is a wilfull perſiſting in any one known Tranſgreſſion of the Law than if he were *guilty of all*.

As to *Sins of Omiſſion*; the words of the Text taken in their full Extent, have a very mortifying Conſideration in them. For it is much eaſier *to know to do good*, than to practiſe it. It is hard for Men under the plain Precepts of the Goſpel, not *to know how to do good*; but who is there that can ſay, he *doth all the good he knows?* We all know, we ought *to love God with all our heart and ſoul and ſtrength, and our Neighbour as our ſelves*; yet who can pretend to do it in the utmoſt latitude and extent of our Duty? So that what St. *Paul* ſaith of the Law, is true of the Text, that *it concludes all under Sin.* For, as our Apoſtle ſaith, *in many things we offend all.* And the more we know, the more we offend, as he tells us in theſe words, *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is ſin.*

Gal. 3. 22.

Jam. 3. 2.

What Advantage then have we by the Goſpel, ſince the more we know of our Duty, the worſe our Condition is,

if

if we do not practiſe it? and we know ſo much more to be our Duty than we can hope to practiſe; that this Expreſſion ſeems to leave Mankind in a more deplorable Condition under the Light of the Goſpel, than if we had never heard of it. For, if the Sin be aggravated by *knowing* our Duty, and *not doing it*, it muſt proportionably be leſſened by having no Opportunities to know it.

Therefore, for the clearing the Senſe of the Apoſtle in theſe words, and for the right underſtanding the juſt Meaſures of our Duty, and the due Aggravation of our Sins, it will be neceſſary to ſtate and clear the Nature and Extent of *Sins of Omiſſion*: Or to ſhew how far this Rule of the Apoſtle holds, *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.*

To do good here, doth not barely imply ſomething that is lawfull and commendable, which it is ſome way in our *Power* to do; but that to which we are under ſome *Obligation*, ſo that it becomes *our Duty* to do it. For a *Sin of Omiſſion* muſt ſuppoſe an *Obligation*; ſince every *Sin* muſt be *a Tranſ-*

Omiſſio non eſt niſi boni debiti ad quod aliquis tenetur, Aqu. 2. 3. 79. 3. & 1. 2. 6. 3. Reginald. Prax. l. 15. c. 2. n. 10.

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greſſion of the Law. But there are ſeveral ſorts of things that are *good*; and there are different kinds of *Obligation*; and from hence ariſes the Difficulty of ſtating the Nature of *Sins of Omiſſion*; which ſome are too little ſenſible of, and ſome too much.

But it is in it ſelf a Subject of ſo important a Nature, and ſo ſeldom ſpoken to, that I ſhall at this time endeavour to clear it. And in order thereto we muſt enquire,

I. Into that *Good* which we are obliged to do.

II. The Nature of the *Obligation* we are under to do it.

I. As to the *Good* which we are obliged to do; that may be conſidered two ways.

1. With reſpect to God, and ſo it implies the Duty we owe, on the Account of the Relation we ſtand in to him.

2. With reſpect to one another; and ſo it implies not meer Duty but ſomething beneficial and advantageous to others, which we are in a *Capacity* to do.

1. Our

1. Our Duty with reſpect to God, is either

1. That of our Minds, which lie in internal Acts, which we are bound to perform towards him.

2. That which conſiſts in external Acts of Duty and Service to him.

1. The Duty which we owe to God in our Minds; which is, not barely to know him, but frequently to conſider and think of him, as our Maker and Benefactor. It is a ſtrange Incogitancy in Mankind to live, as *without God in the World*; to ſuffer the Cares and Thoughts and Buſineſs of this World to juſtle God out of our Minds; whom we ought in the firſt Place to regard. If we could free our Minds from that Diſorder and Confuſion they are under by the ſtrong Impreſſions of ſenſible Objects, and the falſe Idea's of Imagination, they would think of nothing ſo freely, ſo frequently, ſo delightfully as the Divine Perfections. For God being the moſt perfect Mind; other Minds that are created by him, do naturally tend towards him as their Centre, and are uneaſie and reſtleſs, like the Needle touched with the Load-ſtone, till they are fixed towards him. We meet with too

too many things which divert and draw them another way; but it is certainly one of the most necessary Duties lying upon us, to call back our Thoughts from too busie and eager a Pursuit of Earthly things; and to fix them in the serious Thoughts of God and another World.

1. 2. Q. 89. 6. Victor. Rel. 13. Navarr. Man. c. 11. n. 7. Tolet. Sum. l. 4. c. 9. It is the Opinion of *Aquinas* and the older Casuists, that *assoon as ever any Person is come to the use of his Reason, he is not only bound to think of God, but to love him as his chief Good; and that it is the most dangerous Sin of Omission not to do it.*

Azor. T. 1. l. 9. c. 4. Gr. de Val. Tr. 2. Disp. 6. Qu. 19. Tr. 3. Dis. 3. Qu. 19.

The latter Casuists, who think this Doctrine too severe, as to the *first use of Reason*; yet cannot deny it to hold, *assoon as any come to the Knowledge of God*; if the want of knowing him be not through their own Fault. Assoon as they know God, they confess, that they are bound to love him; but are they not bound to know him assoon as they are capable? What allowance may be made in the Cases of gross Ignorance, or natural Stupidity we are not con-

concerned to enquire; but we now ſpeak of thoſe who have all Advantages and Opportunities of knowing God betimes; and as to ſuch their Ignorance is ſo far from being an Excuſe, that it is their Sin. And that can never excuſe from a Fault, but when it is no Fault to be ignorant.

But, *Not to know God* when Perſons know ſo many other things in the World beſides him, is ſo much greater a Fault; becauſe all thoſe other things lead them to the Knowledge of him. So that I take it for granted, that no Man of Underſtanding can avoid the Knowledge of God, without ſhutting his Eye againſt the cleareſt Light; without darkening his Underſtanding by unreaſonable Prejudices; without Confuſion of Thought, and Perplexity of Mind; without groundleſs Imaginations, and ridiculous Suppoſitions; and moſt commonly not without very diſorderly Paſſions and vicious Habits, which make the very Thoughts of God uneaſie to his Mind.

But ſuppoſe we do own and believe a God, are we bound always to be thinking of him? Muſt we ſpend our time in Contemplation of him, and neglect

neglect all our Affairs here? If not, what are the bounds of our Duty which we may not omit without Sin?

There are two things which are neceſſary for us to do with reſpect to God in our Minds.

1. To have frequent and ſerious Thoughts of him; without which it will be impoſſible to keep our Minds in that Temper which they ought to be in. For the Thoughts of God keep up a vigorous Senſe of Religion, inflame our Devotion, calm our Paſſions, and are the moſt powerfull Check againſt the Force of Temptations. And therefore we ought to allow our ſelves fit Times of Retirement for Recollection and Conſideration; wherein we draw in our Thoughts from the Buſineſs and Impertinencies of this Life (and even theſe go a great way in that which looks like Buſineſs) that we may converſe with God and our own Minds. And thoſe who do not ſometimes withdraw from the Noiſe and Hurry, the Duſt and Confuſion of this World, muſt be great Strangers both to God and themſelves; and mind any thing rather than their chiefeſt Intereſt. But I am afraid there are too many among us,

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of whom the Pſalmiſt's words are too true, *God is not in all their thoughts*; I wiſh there were not ſome who would make good another Reading of thoſe words, *viz. All their thoughts are there is no God.* But I think not ſo much their deliberate *Thoughts*, as their *Wiſhes* and *Deſires*. But thoſe can never alter the Nature of things; and therefore the wiſeſt thing they can do, is to make the Thoughts of God deſirable to them; and that can be only by reconciling themſelves to him by a hearty and ſincere Repentance. Pſal. 10. 4.

2. We are always bound to have an habitual Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind towards God. This is that which is commonly called the *Love of God*; and is oppoſed to the *Love of Sin.* Which doth not conſiſt in ſudden and tranſient Acts of Complacency and Delight in him; but in a firm Purpoſe and Reſolution of Mind to obey him. The *Jews* think that the fundamental Precept of the Law as to the *Love of God with all their heart and ſoul and ſtrength*, goes no farther than that they ſhould do that which the Law requires as to the Worſhip and Service of God. But certainly the Love of God muſt go Deut. 6. 5. 10. 12.

deeper, and rise higher, or else it will never come up to the great Design of Religion; which is, not only to do those outward Acts of Service which he commands and expects from us; but to bring our Souls nearer to him, to make him our chief End; and to direct the Course of our Lives and the Acts of our Obedience in order to it.

Now this is a Duty towards God so necessary to our Happiness, that we must be always obliged to it, and at all times; although it be an *Affirmative Precept*. For the true Reason of the Difference of Obligation is from the *Nature* of the *Commands*, and not from the *Manner* of *Expressing* them either *Negatively* or *Affirmatively*. The Reason of the perpetual Obligation of *Negative* Precepts is, that it can never be lawfull to do what God forbids; but it may be sometimes lawfull to omit what he requires; because the Circumstances may make it not to be a Duty at that time. But when an *Affirmative* Precept is of that Nature that no Circumstances can alter the Obligation of it, then it binds as much as a *Negative*. And so it is as to the Command of true Repentance, and turning from the Love

of

of Sin, to the Love of God; for no Man can be in such Circumstances wherein he is not bound to do it.

But as to particular Acts of Repentance and of the Love of God, supposing that habitual Temper, the Obligation of them is according to the proper Seasons and Occasions of them. When a Sinner is conscious to himself of fresh Acts of Sin, he is bound to renew his Repentance, and the Omission of it adds to his Guilt; and when God calls Men to Repentance in a more than ordinary Manner, by strong Convictions of Conscience; or some awakening Providence; or by some solemn Times of Fasting; he is guilty of a farther Aggravation of his Sin, if he neglects those Seasons of performing the proper Acts of Repentance.

But suppose we do know God, and have this habitual Love to him as our chief End, doth this come up to all that Mankind owes to God? Do we know him and love him and serve him as we ought to do? Do we not fail in the Manner and Degree of those very Duties which we in some Measure perform? And are not these Failings O-

miſſions? And will not theſe Omiſſions be charged upon us as Sins? How then can Mankind hope to eſcape the Wrath of God againſt thoſe who continue in the Practice of Sin?

To anſwer this, we muſt diſtinguiſh between *Omiſſion* as a *Defect* and as a *wilfull Sin.* We muſt ſay, as St. *James* James 3. 2. doth, *In many things we offend all*; and in all things, I am afraid, we offend ſome way or other; *if God would be exact to mark what is done amiſs.* But here lies the main Point as to this Matter, how far God will charge thoſe things upon us as Omiſſions, which in us come rather from want of *Power* than of *Will* to do them? I do not mean of *Natural Faculties*, for thoſe we have entire, but of *Moral Power*, i. e. of ſuch a Meaſure of Divine Grace as will enable us to do things beyond the Imperfection and Infirmity of our preſent State; which, in this fallen Condition, is like that of a Man under a Dead-Palſie, who hath all the Parts of a Man, but not the Power of moving them. And where God by his Grace doth recover Mankind to a new Life, yet there are ſuch Remainders of the former Deadneſs upon us, as makes us unable

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to do that which we moſt deſire to do; and do fail in the Manner of Performance, where we are ſincere as to our Purpoſe and Deſign. But will God lay theſe moral Defects, or Infirmities of our corrupt Nature on us as wilfull Sins now under the Goſpel? God forbid. I do not queſtion God's Right to command us all that which is juſt in it ſelf, and he hath given us Faculties to do; but I conſider him as a gracious Lord towards a decayed Tenant, of whom, if he be willing to pay what he is able, *he will not exact the uttermoſt Farthing*; As a compaſſionate Commander to a wounded Soldier, who is willing to accept what Service he is able to do, although he fails in many Points of his Duty; As the good *Samaritan*, which poured in *Wine and Oil* into the Wounds which he had not made; and diſcharged *the Debt* which he had not contracted. If God were not infinitely gracious and mercifull, there were little hopes for us to avoid Puniſhment; but ſince he is pleaſed to deal with us upon the Terms of a new Covenant, we have reaſon to hope that he will not charge *Involuntary Neglects* and *Moral Diſabilities* upon us, as *Sins of Omiſſion.*

2. There are *Duties* of *External Worſhip and Service* owing to God; and how ſhall we know when the *Omiſſion* of theſe becomes a Sin to us? For theſe are not always neceſſary, and ſometimes we may be hindred from them.

To anſwer this, I lay down theſe Rules;

I. A conſtant or habitual Neglect of thoſe Duties which God hath appointed for his Worſhip and Service, cannot be without a Sin of Omiſſion; becauſe, that muſt ariſe from an evil Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. When it comes from a Contempt of God and his Service, it muſt be a Sin, becauſe the Reaſon of it is a very great one. When it comes barely from a careleſs, indifferent, ſlothfull Temper, which is glad of any Excuſes for the Neglect or Omiſſion of them; it argues very little Senſe of Religion, or Regard to God and his Service, when they are ſo ready to find an Excuſe for their Fault.

But ſome are ready to juſtifie themſelves in ſuch a Neglect, as though all the outward Worſhip of God were meer Ceremony, and only a decent way of entertaining the People with ſome outward

ward Pomp and Shew of Devotion towards a *Divine Majeſty*.

I am afraid, ſuch hardly mention a *Divine Majeſty*, but in a Complement; however, we are willing to believe that they do own ſuch a *Being*, but they think it a vain thing to ſerve him; as though he could be moved by our Prayers to him, or Praiſes of him. We do not deny that God is infinitely above all our Services: But is that a Reaſon why we ſhould not ſerve him in the way he requires it from us? He doth not want our Services, but we want his Favour and Bleſſings; and can we expect them, when we ſlight that little Service, in compariſon of the time he allows for other Imployments, which he expects from us? If we had nothing but the Light of Nature to direct us, we ſhould conclude it very reaſonable that Mankind ſhould own their Creator, by ſome outward, and publick, and ſtated Ways and Times of Worſhip. For this is no more than natural Juſtice to own our Maker and Benefactor; and can it become leſs neceſſary, when he hath declared himſelf pleaſed with the Performance of them, and made great Promiſes to thoſe who call upon him?

But this, say they, is the greatest Difficulty of all, to understand what Effect our Prayers can have upon the Eternal Counsels of Heaven; since they are already fixed and cannot be reversed by our Prayers.

As great as this Difficulty is, the true Point of it is only this; Whether we are to believe and trust the frequent and repeated Promises of God, altho' we are not able to comprehend, how the Efficacy of our Prayers is taken in, as a necessary Condition towards the Execution of God's Eternal Purposes. For, if they are Conditions, as the Scripture often tells us; then we may easily understand what is meant by the Efficacy of Prayers; and as to the manner of reconciling such contingent Conditions with God's Eternal Purposes; it is a Difficulty which will afford perpetual Matter of Dispute, but ought no more to hinder us from plain Duties, than a Man should be from going a necessary Journey, till he be satisfied whether the Earth moves about the Sun, or the Sun about the Earth.

II. Whether the Omission of such publick Duties of Divine Worship be a Sin

Sin or not, depends very much on the *Reaſon and Occaſion* of it. For if it be a wilfull Neglect, it doth imply a Degree of Contempt, and that cannot be without Sin. And that is a wilfull Neglect, when nothing but an Act of a Man's own Will hinders him from ſerving God in publick: I do not mean only at the very time, but if he hath by ſome former Act of his Will brought an Incapacity upon himſelf, that want of Power doth not excuſe, when the Impotency ariſes from a voluntary Act of his own. If it be intended on purpoſe to hinder, it is as wilfull in its Cauſe, as if there were no ſuch Impediment. For, although the actual Impediment be the immediate Cauſe of the Omiſſion; yet it is the Deſign and Purpoſe which makes it wilfull. But if Perſons by an Act of Providence without their own Fault be hindred from the Worſhip of God as by long Sickneſs; no one can ſay, that this Omiſſion is wilfull, and therefore cannot be accounted a Sin. But if a Perſon by his Intemperance and Debauchery hath brought himſelf into an Incapacity of attending on the Service of God; we cannot ſay that the actual Omiſſion

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was wilfull; but we may justly say, that the original Cause was so; and that it cannot excuse the Omission.

II. But besides the Duties which we owe to God, there are such which we owe to one another, which cannot be omitted without Sin. But here the stating of the Case seems yet more difficult, since there is not so plain an Authority to oblige, nor such a Relation to each other, as we stand in to God. And besides the Circumstances of humane Affairs are oftentimes so intricate and perplexed, that it is very hard for Persons to know their Duties, and much more to practise them.

But there are certainly such Duties, which we owe both *to the Publick and to one another*; and it may be of some Use to us to understand the force of the Obligation, and what those are which cannot be *Omitted* without *Sin*.

1. *As to the Publick*; and concerning that, we may take Notice of two Rules;

1. Those Duties cannot be omitted without Sin, which cannot be omitted without Prejudice to the publick Good. By which I do not mean any fanciful Noti-

Notions, or Pretences to it, but the true and real publick Intereſt of the Nation; which conſiſts in the Preſervation of our Religion and Laws. The main Duty of this kind, which I ſhall inſiſt upon, is the laying aſide all Heats and Animoſities and Diſtinctions of Parties, and minding and carrying on that which is the undoubted common Intereſt of us all. What is the Meaning of all thoſe Jealouſies and Suſpicions which are among us, when we all profeſs to own the ſame Religion, the ſame Laws, and the ſame Government?

This is a very melancholy Subject to ſpeak of; for this unſeaſonable Difference of Parties among our ſelves, is like a flaming Meteor in the Air, we can hardly keep our ſelves from looking upon it; and yet cannot behold it without ſome kind of Terror and Amazement. It is diſputed among the Caſuiſts, whether if a Man ſees two Men fighting with each other, he be bound to part them to his own Hazard; and the general Reſolution is, that if he be in a private Capacity he is not, but in a publick he is. I hope the publick Capacity, I appear in here at this time, will excuſe my interpoſing

ſing to allay ſuch Heats and Animoſities as are not only of dangerous Conſequence, but great Sins. And therefore, unleſs I would be guilty of omitting a Duty my ſelf, I muſt (and will) lay open the Miſchief of ſuch divided Intereſts as the Difference of Parties carries along with them.

When God had given Children to *Rebekah*, while they were yet unborn, and in their Mother's Womb, ſhe found them ſtruggling within her to ſuch a Degree as made her in a Conſternation to cry out, *If it be ſo, why am I thus?* i.e. If God hath given me theſe Children for Bleſſings, What is the meaning of this *ſtruggling* between them? And it is ſaid, her Concernment was ſo great,
Gen. 25. 22. *that ſhe went to enquire of the Lord.* Some think that *Melchiſedek* was ſtill living at *Salem*, and that ſhe went to him, to conſult about the Conſequence of it; and he was a very proper Perſon for it; for he was *King of Righteouſneſs* and *King of Peace*. And thoſe are the beſt Antidotes againſt the Struggling and Animoſities of thoſe who have the ſame common Intereſt and Obligations. We need not to conſult any Oracle in this Caſe; for St. *Paul* hath told

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us that, *if we bite and devour one another*; not like Canibals, but like different Parties, living in Hatred and Malice and Animosity to each other; take heed, saith he, *that ye be not consumed one of another*. As if he had said, Things cannot always continue at this pass, the inward Fires, if not suppressed, will break out at last, and in Probability end in your mutual Destruction. Gal. 5. 15.

Nothing hath more puzzled the Wits of Men in this inquisitive Age, than to give an Account of the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; but a great Man of our Nation hath told us, that we need not run to the Moon, or other remoter Causes; for the true Reason of it is nothing else but the clashing of the Waters of two mighty Seas crossing each other; and therefore, where there are no such contrary Motions, there is no such *Ebbing* and *Flowing*. We have too much of this *Ebbing* and *Flowing* upon Land, both as to our Condition and Expectation. But whence comes it? Is it not from two Parties among us crossing and striving to overtop and overpower each other? And till we unite and join in the same common Current, we have little Cause to hope for *Lord* Bacon *Impetus Phil.*

for a State of Peace and Tranquility.
Mat. 12. 25. Our Saviour tells us, *a Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf cannot ſtand.* I need not tell you of what Kingdom he ſpeaks; but it was ſuch a one, where there would be no Subtilty or Diligence wanting in the ſeveral Parties as to carrying on their Deſigns; but he looks on an united common Intereſt ſo neceſſary to the Preſervation of Government, that he declares, that no kind of Society can be ſupported without it. If we then regard the Intereſt of our Nation or of our Religion; if we would avoid the Shame and Reproach of deſtroying by our Diviſions, what we pretended *to value above our Lives*; we muſt lay aſide our mutual Jealouſies and Suſpicions; we muſt abate our Heats and Animoſities; we muſt unite and join in *the things that belong to our Peace.* But if *they be hid from our eyes*; then I am afraid what St. *Paul* ſaid of the *Goſpel* may be too truly applied to *the things of our Peace*; *If they be hid, they are hid to them that are loſt*; *in whom the God of this World hath blinded their eyes.* For it is too apparent, that the true Ground of the Contention of the ſeveral Parties, is not Matter of Con-

Conſcience or Religion, or the common Intereſt of the Nation, but about Power and Superiority over each other; which, if it be carried on, in humane Probability can end in nothing but mutual Deſtruction. Which God of his Mercy prevent.

II. Men cannot without Sin *omit* the doing thoſe Duties which their Places do require from them. For thoſe are intended for a publick Benefit.

Thoſe who *ſtudy to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs*, are not only the beſt Chriſtians, but the beſt Inſtruments of the publick Good. Whereas, Men of turbulent, reſtleſs and ambitious Minds, who make abundance of Noiſe and Clamour, are like Waſps, always flying and buzzing about, and very angry and peeviſh and diſcontented; but are nothing ſo *uſefull* as the more ſilent and induſtrious Bees; which make the beſt of every thing, and ſerve the common Intereſt by it. 1 Theſſ. 4. 11.

Every Society of Men is a Body made up of Head and Members knit and compacted together by Joints and Bands; but all have their ſeveral Uſes and Functions, and while theſe are duly perfor-

performed, the whole is preſerved; but if the Feet ſhould mutiny againſt the other Parts, becauſe they bear the Burthen of the whole; or the Stomach, that it is loaded and oppreſſed with what ſerves for the Nouriſhment of all; or the Head, that it muſt direct and contrive and manage all; what would the Effect be of ſuch Complaints and Diſcontents at their own Share, but that the whole Body muſt ſuffer by them. While all the Materials of a Building are kept in their due Place and Order, the whole is ſtrengthened and ſupported; but if they ſtart out of their Places and tumble one upon another, the whole muſt fall.

There are always ſome who love to carry on their own Ends under publick Pretences; and if thoſe be not attained, they matter not what becomes of all other Intereſts, although their own muſt ſuffer with the reſt. Theſe are like the Ivy to a flouriſhing Tree, which ſeems to embrace it and ſtick cloſe to it, but it is for its own Advantage; but at the ſame time, it weakens it and hinders its Growth, and if it falls, it muſt periſh together with it.

But

But there are others, who by the very Duties of their Places are bound to regard the Publick and the Good of others; and when they do it not, they are certainly guilty of *Sins* of *Omiſſion* in a high Degree. For every ſuch Place is a Truſt from God, of which an Account muſt be given; and a Sacred and Solemn Obligation goes along with them; ſo that there can be no Sins of Omiſſion in ſuch Caſes, without *Sins* of *Commiſſion* of as high a Nature as Breach of Truſt, and of the moſt ſolemn Obligations. The truth is, the World is ſo humourſome and fantaſtical a thing, that it will hardly endure to be made better; ſo that thoſe who have the greateſt Zeal and Reſolution to *do good*, are extremely diſcouraged in it, when they find ſo many Objections and Difficulties; ſuch Frowardneſs and Perverſeneſs in ſome, ſuch Remiſneſs and Coldneſs in others, ſuch an Univerſal *Laſſitude and Indifferency*, that it is enough to check the beſt Inclinations that way, and to make them leave the World to be managed as it will. And there are ſome *Seaſons* wherein it is much harder to *do good* than in others. Such I mean, when Wickedneſs

and Vice have corrupted the very Principles of Men's minds; when they account it a Piece of Wit to be profane, and a higher sort of Breeding to despise Religion and Vertue; when some are ready to pervert the best Designs, and mix such mean and sinister Ends of their own with them, and thereby blast them, that they come to nothing; when others will not endure that good may be done, unless they may have the sole doing of it, and endeavour to lessen the Reputation of all who are *not altogether such as themselves*; When all imaginable Arts are used to make Government contemptible; and the best Purposes ineffectual; Lastly, when any who are bound to carry on the publick Good, account it Wisdom to do little or nothing in their Places, and take all possible Care to disoblige no Body by doing their Duties, for fear of evil Consequences; I say, when such Seasons do happen, there is a very melancholy Prospect of Affairs, and little Hopes of *doing* or of *seeing Good*.

II. I now proceed to the *Good* which we are to do with respect to others of the same Nature and in a worse Condition

tion than our ſelves; and therefore need our Help and Aſſiſtance. This is ſo remarkable a Senſe of *doing Good*, that it hath almoſt appropriated the Name to it ſelf; as *Good Works* are generally taken for Works of Charity. Theſe are ſuch, as all agree, that they cannot be wholly omitted without Sin; but the Difficulty lies in ſtating the Meaſure and Seaſons of the Obligation to them. Concerning which, theſe Rules may be obſerved:

1. That the Meaſures of Duty in this Caſe are very different, according to the different Circumſtances and Conditions of Perſons. For, although the ſtanding general Rules of our Duty are fixed and unalterable; yet the particular Obligations depend upon great Variety of Circumſtances, as to thoſe who are to do and to receive Good. If the Eaſineſs of Perſons Conditions in the World will afford their laying by a conſtant Stock of Charity, it will be always in readineſs for ſuch Occaſions, when we would be more willing to do good if it were in our Power; but it is hardly poſſible to make ſuch Rules which may not give Occaſions for trouble to ſcrupulous Minds, when

they do not ſtrictly obſerve them. But we are all ſo far bound to do good to thoſe in want, that the not doing it according to our Abilities and Opportunities, is ſuch a Sin of Omiſſion as is inconſiſtent with true Chriſtianity; but of thoſe, every Perſon is left to judge; but ſo, as he muſt give an Account of it at the Great Day. For, it is obſervable, that our Saviour ſpeaking of the Proceedings then, particularly mentions the *Sins* of *Omiſſion* with reſpect to the doing good to others.

Matt. 25. 42.

2. There are particular Seaſons, when a greater Meaſure of *doing good* is required than at others: *i.e.* When Perſons ſuffer for Religion and a good Conſcience; When the Neceſſities of People are more general and preſſing; When great Objects of Charity are certainly known to our ſelves and concealed from others; When a preſent Relief puts them into a way of *doing good* for themſelves; When God hath *done good* to us after a more remarkable Manner than he hath to others; When we *do the more Good*, becauſe we have done ſo much Evil; and thereby manifeſt the Sincerity of our Repentance, by bringing forth ſuch Fruits worthy of Amend-

mendment of Life; When our Calling and Profeſſion is to *do good*; and we are bound to give the beſt Examples to others according to our Abilities: When our Religion ſuffers by not *doing good*, and our Faith is queſtioned for want of *good Works*; Laſtly, When there are no ſuch Natural Drains of Charity, as Children and near Relations which need our Aſſiſtance; in theſe and many other Inſtances of a like Nature, there is ſo much greater Obligation to the *doing good*, that it cannot be omitted without Sin.

II. I now come in the laſt Place, to conſider the *Nature* of the *Obligation* we lye under to do the Good we know. And the Reaſon of conſidering this, is from the Compariſon of ſeveral Duties with one another; for we may be bound to ſeveral things at the ſame time, but we cannot perform them together; and the Difficulty then is to underſtand, which of theſe Duties we may omit without Sin.

And the Compariſon may be threefold;

1. As to the Nature of the Duties.

2. As to the Authority which enjoyns them.

3. As to the particular Obligation we are under to do them.

1. As to the Nature of our Duties. For there are ſeveral kinds of things that are *good*; and we are to have a different Regard to them. Some things are good becauſe they are commanded; and ſome things are commanded, becauſe they are good; and even God himſelf allows us to make a Difference between theſe, when himſelf ſaith, *I*
Hoſ. 6. 6. *will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; although he required both; but if it happens that both cannot be done, then he prefers the former, altho' his own Honour ſeems more concerned in the latter. Our Saviour extends this Rule to *Mercy* on the Souls of Men; and to
Matt. 9. 13. *Mercy* on our Bodies, even out of the Caſe of urgent or extreme Neceſſity, which cannot be pleaded in the Apo-
12. 7. ſtle's Caſe of *plucking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day*. But from hence we have ground to inferr, that when two Duties interfere with one another, we are bound to preferr the greater and more ſubſtantial Duty, and then the Omiſſion of the leſſer is no Sin.

2. As

2. As to the Authority which requires them. There is no queſtion, but when the Authority of God and Man do contradict each other, *God is to be obeyed rather than Man.* But the Authority of God's Command is not equally clear in all Caſes; for ſome things are required plainly and directly, and ſome things by conſequence and parity of Reaſon; ſome things are declared and enforced by the Goſpel, others left to our own Deductions and Inferences; ſome things are made poſitive Commands for all Ages, others are reported by way of Example, but that Example underſtood by the Church to have the force of a Command; now, in all theſe and other like Caſes, we ought to have the greateſt regard to plain, poſitive, moral and perpetual Commands; but withall, to have a due regard to conſequential and uſefull Duties, eſpecially where the Church of God hath always ſo underſtood them, which is the beſt Interpreter of ſuch doubtfull Caſes, where the Senſe of it is truly delivered to us.

3. As to the *Obligation* we are under; and that is three-fold. 1. That of *Nature*, which is, to act according

to Reaſon; and none can queſtion that, but thoſe who queſtion, whether there be any ſuch Principle as Reaſon in Mankind; and whoſoever do ſo, have Reaſon to begin at home. 2. Of *Chriſtianity*, which ſuppoſes and enforces that of Nature, and ſuperadds many other Duties which we are bound to perform as Chriſtians. 3. Of our *ſeveral Relations*, and particular *Imployments*. As to the former, we are under great Obligations from God and Nature and Chriſtianity, to do the Duties which belong to us in them. As to the latter, they commonly require a ſtricter Obligation by Oath, to do thoſe things which otherwiſe we are not bound to do. But being entered into it by a voluntary Act of our own, we cannot omit ſuch Duties without Sin, but where the Circumſtances of things do ſuperſede the Obligation.

Thus I have gone through, as clearly and diſtinctly as I could, the moſt uſefull Caſes relating to *Sins of Omiſſion*; it remains now, that I make ſome *Application* to our ſelves.

When we reflect on our Lives and Actions, our *Sins of Commiſſion* are apt to terrifie our Conſciences, and make

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us very apprehenſive of the Wrath of God; but how few are any ways concerned for their *Sins of Omiſſion*, viz. For not diſcharging the Duties of their Places, for not doing the Good they might and ought to have done, for not ſerving God with Diligence and exemplary Devotion, for not having their Minds ſo fixed and intent upon him as they ought to have on their Creatour and Preſerver and Redeemer? In a very corrupt Age not to be remarkable for *doing Evil* is a kind of Saintſhip; but how few are remarkable for *doing Good?* And yet that is one of the beſt Characters of Saintſhip. How much time is ſquandred away in Vanity and Folly? And yet, how is that grudged which is ſpent in the Worſhip of God? O what a burthen it is to ſerve God, and ſpend any time in Devotion! How many Excuſes and Pretences of Buſineſs will ſuch make rather than attend upon religious Duties, which themſelves would judge very frivolous in other Matters! And will God and Conſcience be ſatisfied with ſuch unequal Dealing, ſuch notorious Partiality? Let us deal faithfully and ſincerely with our ſelves;

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Are we as ready to ſerve God as to ſerve our Luſts and Pleaſures? Have we the ſame regard to his Worſhip that we have to any thing we really love and eſteem?

If not, there muſt be ſomething very much amiſs in the Temper and Diſpoſition of the Mind; and we are highly concerned to look into it. I do not ſpeak now of *caſual* and *accidental Omiſſions* of ſome particular Duties at ſome times; but of a *general* Unconcernedneſs about Matters of Religion, as though they were either too high in the Speculation, or too mean and low in the Practice of them; or at leaſt, that it is no great Matter one way or other, whether they mind them or not. This, I am afraid, is too much the Temper of the Age we live in; which ſeems to be ſinking into a ſtrange *Indifferency* about Religion. It is poſſible for Perſons to have a Zeal againſt ſome corrupt Opinions and Practices in Religion; and yet to have no true Zeal or Concernment for Religion it ſelf. For they may ſo much hate being impoſed upon by falſe Pretenders, that carry on an Intereſt and Faction, under the Shew of Religion, as from thence

thence to ſuſpect all Religion to be nothing elſe; which is as unreaſonable, as for a Man to conclude, that all Merchants and Jewellers are Cheats, and that there are no ſuch things (nor can be) as true Diamonds in the World, becauſe he hath fallen into the hands of ſuch as would have cheated him with thoſe which were counterfeit. And it is common with ſuch who deſign to deceive, that what they want in *Sincerity*, they make up with *Confidence*. This is a good Argument for caution and looking about us; but it is none at all for our indifferency about Matters of Religion. For it is not here, as in Jewels, which are fine things to look upon; but the Happineſs of Life doth not depend upon them. But would any one let alone things neceſſary to the Support of Life, becauſe Poiſon may be put into them? We may take care to prevent it; but we muſt have the Neceſſaries of Life; and it would be great Folly to die for want of Suſtenance, for fear of being poyſoned.

If we have no true Love to God and Religion, we muſt periſh; for there is no hopes of Salvation without it. And

if

if we go on in a careleſs Indifferency about God and his Service; If we do not do our Endeavours for ſuppreſſing Wickedneſs and Vice; if we do not mind Religion our ſelves, nor are incouraging it in others, it will ſhew that we have not that Love of God and Religion which we ought to have.

Therefore, if we regard the Honour of God, our own Salvation; the Duties of our Places, the Intereſt of the Nation, and the Satisfaction of all that are wiſe and good, we muſt ſhake off all this Coldneſs and Indifferency about Religion, and apply our ſelves heartily and ſincerely to promote the great Ends of it; which are, to make Perſons good in this World, and happy in another.

Which God of his Mercy grant, &c.

SER-

SERMON XI.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL:

Before the

Princeſs of *Denmark,*

February the 11th. 168$\frac{6}{7}$.

St. Matth. XXVI. 41.

Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation; the Spirit indeed is willing, but the Fleſh is weak.

THESE words were ſpoken by our Saviour, to his Diſciples, at a critical time, when they were juſt *entring into Temptation*, but they were very little apprehenſive of it, and of their

their Inability to withſtand it. Like *Jonas*, they were fallen aſleep when the Storm was gathering about them, and did not imagine they were ſo near being caſt into a rough and tempeſtuous Sea. It was but a little before, *Ver.* 26. that Chriſt had entertained them at the proper Banquet of the *Meſſias*, (which the Jews ſpeak ſo much of) but not ſuch a one as they fanſied, made up of the greateſt Delicacies and Varieties of Meats and Drinks; but at a Supper of his own appointing, where ordinary Bread and Wine were made uſe of to ſet forth the moſt unvaluable Kindneſs, which was ever manifeſted to the world, in his now approaching Agonies, and ſuffering on the Croſs for the Expiation of the Sins of it.

One would have thought, the very mention of *the ſhedding of his Blood*, Ver. 28. ſhould have ſtartled and amazed, and confounded the Spirits of his few, weak, and concerned Diſciples, who placed all their Happineſs and Comfort in the Preſence and Safety of their beloved Lord. Eſpecially, when he took his ſolemn leave of them after this Supper, in that admirable Diſcourſe related by *S. John*, which he concludes with

Ch. 14. 15, 16.

with that moſt Divine Prayer, *Chap.* 17. But all this made no great Impreſſion upon them at that time; not through any natural dulneſs or ſtupidity; but they were ſo poſſeſſed with an Opinion of his Power and Wiſdom to free himſelf from Danger and Suffering, and they had ſeen ſo many Experiments of it, that they could not believe it till they ſaw him actually betrayed and carried away. For when he told them, as they were going up to *Jeruſalem*, that he ſhould be *betrayed, condemned, mocked and ſcourged and crucified*; the Evangeliſt ſaith, *They underſtood none of theſe things*; *i. e.* they took all that relates to the greatneſs of his Sufferings, and his Departure from them, to be ſome deep Myſtery and Allegory, which their Capacities could not comprehend, and that becauſe of his Figurative and Parabolical way of ſpeaking; as when he ſaid, *He would not henceforth drink of the fruit of the Vine, untill he drank it new with them in the Kingdom of Heaven.* They could not tell; but the ſhedding his Blood might be as Figurative an Expreſſion as this was.

Luk. 18. 31, 32.

Ver. 34.

Matth. 26. 29.

Our Saviour perceiving them to be ſtill ſo ſecure and inapprehenſive, after the

the usual Hymn at the end of the Passover, he takes them out to accompany him to a Garden near the Mount of *Olives*, whither as S. *John* saith, *He*
Joh. 18. 2. *often resorted with his Disciples.* As they were going along our Saviour tells them more plainly, that very night such a wonderful Alteration would happen among them, that they who now seemed to value him above all the World, and to rejoyce in nothing but his Presence, would shamefully forsake him
Ver. 31. and disown him, *All ye shall be offended because of me this night*; S. *Peter* had so little mistrust of himself, that he boldly
Ver. 33. answered, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Our Saviour pitied him for his Weakness and Presumption; and withal tells him, though he thought so well of himself then, he would fall the first and the foulest of any; Jesus said
Ver. 34. unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the Cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice.* Yet such was S. *Peter's* Confidence of himself by reason of his present warmth and resolution, that he
Ver. 35. Replies, with great assurance, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* It was bravely said, and no doubt

at

at that time he meant as he ſpake. But this Reſolution was not peculiar to him; for the reſt of the Diſciples expreſſed the ſame. *Likewiſe alſo ſaid all the Diſciples.* Never did Perſons ſeem better reſolved than theſe; there was no Hypocriſie, or Falſe-heatedneſs, no Artifice or Deſign in all this; they verily believed themſelves, and did not in the leaſt queſtion, but they could as readily die for Chriſt at that time, as they could live with him. But our Bleſſed Lord was more ſenſible of their Weakneſs, than they were themſelves; he knew what a ſudden change his Apprehenſion and Arraignment would cauſe in their Minds; how their Paſſions would be too ſtrong for their Reſolutions; and they who ſo lately had declared *they would die with Chriſt*, could not have the heart to ſtand by him: Therefore, although his own Sufferings came on very faſt upon him, and ſeized firſt upon his Mind, when he ſaid, *My Soul is exceeding ſorrowful even unto death*; and pray'd in that paſſionate manner to be delivered, when he fell on his Face and ſaid, *O my Father, if it be poſſible let this Cup paſs from me*, &c. yet he was ſo concerned

Ver. 38.

39.

for his poor Disciples that were so little apprehensive of their Danger that
40. they were fallen asleep in the Garden; that in the midst of his own Agonies he rouzes them up, and gently awakes them, for their unseasonable Drousiness, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* and immediately subjoyns this short Exhortation,

Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation. From which words, we may consider,

(1.) The Insufficiency of mere present Resolutions without Watchfulness and Prayer.

(2.) The Reason of that Insufficiency from the weakness of the Flesh, joyned with the weakness of the Spirit.

(3.) The necessity arising from hence of *Watchfulness* and *Prayer*.

But before I come to these Particulars, it will be necessary to give some account of what is meant by *entring into Temptation* here; which implies one of these two things: Either,

(1.) That they might be kept from extraordinary Tryals, which seems to be meant in the Lords Prayer, when we say, *lead us not into Temptation.* For to Tempt in general is no more than to Try; and a state

ſtate of Temptation is a ſtate of Tryal; to pray therefore that we may not be put into a ſtate of Temptation, is to pray our ſelves out of this World, which was deſigned by Almighty God for a ſtate of Tryal in order to another World. Therefore when we pray not to be led into Temptation, the meaning is, that God by his wiſe Providence would keep us from ſuch Tryals, which according to the ordinary meaſures of Grace we ſhould hardly be able to withſtand. For, although it be poſſible for thoſe to whom God gives extraordinary Aſſiſtance, not only to reſiſt the Temptation but to triumph over it, and to ſhake off Temptations as St. *Paul* did the Viper from his hand; on which account St. *James* ſaith to ſuch Heroic Chriſtians, *My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers Temptations.* Jam. 1. 2. And, *Bleſſed is the Man which endureth Temptation*, &c. 12. Yet, conſidering the frailty of humane Nature, and that God is not obliged to give extraordinary Aſſiſtance in difficult Caſes, it is a Wiſe and becoming Petition for us to our heavenly Father, that he would not lead us in this manner into Temptation, or as our Saviour here expreſſes it, *To*

pray that we enter not into Temptation.

(2.) But because our Saviour very well knew that his Disciples were so suddenly *to enter into Temptation* in the former Sense; and because it is not fit for us to set Bounds to Gods infinite Wisdom with respect to our Condition, therefore there is a farther meaning in this Expression, *viz.* That if it seems fitting to him who hath the Power and Right to dispose of us, to single us out for great Temptations, or more than ordinary Trials of our Constancy or Resolution, that then he would give such supplies of his Grace and Holy Spirit as may enable us to withstand the force of the Temptation, so, as we be not overcome by it.

And these two take in the whole sense of this Expression, *That ye enter not into Temptation.* We are allowed to pray to be kept out of it; but we are bound to pray and to watch too, least we fall by the Power of Temptation, which is then done when the Motives proper to this World prevail over those which relate to another. The Motives of another world are those of a future and eternal Happiness; the Motives of this

this World are those of present Pleasure, Honour and Riches; and when these come to be inconsistent with our Duty, or apt to draw us from it, they are said to be Temptations to us. For no Sin of it self is a *Temptation*, but something else to be enjoyed by the Commission of Sin; or which cannot be enjoyed without it. As in the Case here mentioned by our Saviour of St. *Peter's* denying his Master, there was no Temptation in the Sin it self; for what was there in an Act so mean, so shameful, so ungrateful to tempt him to commit it, but it was the desire of his present Safety, and the fear of running into the same Danger, in which he saw his Lord, which was the Temptation to him. The Sins of Luxury and Intemperance, that *of Riot and Drunkenness, of Chambring and Wantonness*, are not Temptations in themselves; but the sensual Pleasure which accompanies them, though it be forbidden, is apt to draw the Lovers of it from the strict Rules of Sobriety and Chastity. It is the love of this World, *i. e.* of the Riches and Honours of it, which make the sins of Ambition and Covetousness so plausible and prevailing among Rom. 13. 13.

those who profess to believe another world. Their Souls are like a piece of Iron between two Load-stones of an unequal magnitude and distance; the one is far greater, and hath more force in it self to attract, but it is placed at a far greater distance; the other is much less but very near, and therefore may more powerfully draw, than that which is more forcible but farther off. I do not think, that all those who commit Sin by the Power of Temptation are presently Infidels and dis-believe another world; but, although they do believe the Happiness of another Life, yet it is at a distance, it is out of their view and beyond their apprehension; and therefore doth not work so effectually, as present, visible, sensible Delights do; which have all the advantage of suitableness to our present State, of Familiarity, Nearness, and Insinuation. It is the great Excellency and Usefulness of Faith, that by it we not only believe the things of another world, but that it makes things future to be to us, as if they were present, and things invisible to have such an influence, as if they were visible; and therefore, the Apostle calls it, *The substance of things hoped for, and*

Heb. 11. 1.

the

the evidence of things not seen. Invisible things must have a real Being, before they can be believed; and there must be evidence to the Mind before there can be true Faith; how then can Faith be the Substance and Evidence of things future and possible. I answer, That ὑπόστασις doth not meerly signifie a real Being in opposition to Fancies and Chimera's; but a firm, solid and permanent Being; therefore things which are passing, even as Time and Motion, are said to be ἀνυπόστατα things that had no Consistence or Hypostasis; and being applied to the Mind, it signifies a firm and unshaken Confidence, an inward satisfaction of the Truth of Divine Revelation, an assured Expectation of what God hath promised; and from hence arises that influence which Faith hath on the Minds of Men, in resisting the Temptations of this World. Therefore the two great Principles which govern Mankind, are Faith and Sense; while they are acted by the former, they are said to resist Temptation; when they are sway'd by Sense as it is opposed to Faith, and includes in it the Motives of this World, then they are said to give way to Temptation, or to

With respect to another world.

be overcome by it. And so I come to consider,

(1.) The Insufficiency of present Resolution, to keep us from the Power of Temptation without Watchfulness and Prayer. It is hard to imagine a greater Instance of a firm present Resolution, than there was in St. *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles; nor a sadder example of the Insufficiency of it; which ought to make us *hear and fear, and not be too presumptuous.*

Resolution is certainly one of the best means in the World to withstand Temptations to sin, for it hath these Advantages,

(1.) It keeps the Mind steady and fixed, and therefore prepared to resist a Temptation when it comes. Whereas an irresolved Mind leaves a Man open to the first Assault. It is like disputing in a Garrison who shall Command, when the Enemy is at the Gates. A fixed and settled Mind in Religion is of mighty consequence against all Temptations; for then every thing is in order for resisting when Reason governs the Mind, and the Mind determines the Will, and the Will stands bent and resolved upon that, which upon due

Consider-

Consideration appears to conduce most to our eternal Happiness.

(2.) It takes off the false Colours and Appearances of things; for every thing may be represented plausibly to an irresolute Mind. Temptations to Sin would never be called so, if there were not something tempting in them; and whatever is tempting must have a free appearance in one respect or other; and while a Person is irresolved, he suffers all the force of Temptation to come upon him. But a resolved Mind keeps it at a distance, and so breaks the Power of it; whereas he who lets go his Resolution and treats with a Temptation, is like one who plays with a Tarantula and is bitten before he is aware of it.

But there are two sorts of Resolutions.

(1.) Some that are sudden and made in a heat and passion; without due Consideration and weighing of things; and such as these are of no great force or continuance. And it is often seen that the same heat which caused the Resolution to be made proves the occasion of breaking it, when it is carried another way. The inconstancy of their Temper

Temper makes them resolve, hoping thereby to bind up themselves the faster, but Nature and Temptations soon grow too hard for such Resolutions, which are made only by a sudden Passion.

(2.) There are others which are made about Matters of plain Duty, and against known Temptations to Sin; after a due sense of our own Folly and Weakness, and a firm Purpose never more to return to the practise of Sin. And these are Wise and Pious, as well as serious and deliberate Resolutions; such no doubt the Disciples of Christ had, when they left all and followed Christ; besides this sudden Resolution they took up, that they would rather die with Christ than deny him. Yet taking altogether our Saviour tells them, *They ought to watch and pray that they enter not into Temptation*; and he gives the Reason for it in the following words, *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

(2.) In which words he gives an account of the reason of the Inconstancy, and Insufficiency of good Resolutions, *viz.* that although the *Spirit be willing*, yet there is something we carry about us,

us, which weakens our beſt Reſoluſions, and betrays us into Temptations; our *Fleſh is weak* which being ſo near us, as to be a part of our ſelves, makes our Caſe more dangerous, and enforces the neceſſity of Watchfulneſs and Prayer.

But here ariſes one of the moſt uſeful, neceſſary and important Caſes that relates to practical Chriſtianity; which I ſhall firſt ſet down in its full Force, and then endeavour to clear it.

The Caſe is this; how far, and in what Circumſtances the weakneſs of the Fleſh doth leſſen the guilt of Sin, which is committed by it?

If it be not an Extenuation of the Sin, why doth our Saviour mention it in ſuch a manner? And if it be, then theſe Inconveniencies follow;

(1.) It ſeems to abate the neceſſity of our Care and Watchfulneſs, if the Sin be leſſened through the weakneſs of the Fleſh, which is unavoidable in this imperfect State.

(2.) It ſeems to be a fair Plea and Excuſe for the greateſt part of the Sins of Mankind. For,

(1.) The Original inclination to Sin in Mankind, comes from *the weakneſs of the Fleſh*; the very frame of humane Nature

Nature being such as exposes them to continual Temptations. There is a natural Combat between the Flesh and the Spirit; for *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other*, as the Apostle speaks; and all Mankind find it too true: Now wherever the Flesh is, there are Inclinations agreeable to it, and these being contrary to the Dictates of the Mind, all the Sins of the Flesh will appear to come from the weakness of the Flesh.

Gal. 5. 17.

(2.) The frequent Commission of the same Sins will be laid upon the weakness of the Flesh. For the generality of Mankind do not sin out of defiance to God or his Laws, or with an obstinate Resolution to sin; for, they know their Duty, and wish they could perform it; but alas! The Flesh is too hard for the Spirit in them. They have many Convictions in their Minds, many good Purposes, and serious Resolutions at some times; and if they do sin it is not with their whole Wills, for they have great strugglings and checks of Conscience within, even while they commit those Sins. And therefore what can their continuing in sin

ſin be ſo properly attributed to, as to the weakneſs of the Fleſh.

(3.) Relapſes into the ſame ſin after Repentance, ſeems to proceed from the weakneſs of the Fleſh. For he that hath once ſmarted ſeverely for his Sins, and ſuffered under the Agonies of Conſcience for them; he that hath gone ſo far, as not meerly to lament his Folly, and to abhor his Wickedneſs, but to make ſolemn Vows and Promiſes, and Reſolutions never more to return to the Practice of them; it is hard to conceive, that ſuch a one ſhould fall into his Sins again with his whole Mind and Soul; for the Light of Conſcience when it is once throughly kindled, is not eaſily put out; it is a ſecret Fire which burns inward, and can hardly be extinguiſhed; and all thoſe who ſin againſt Conſcience, the Dictates of their Minds are right while they commit their Sins; and therefore even theſe Sins ſeem to be excuſed by the weakneſs of the Fleſh.

But on the other ſide, the Scripture is plain and expreſs, that Sins which do come from the Fleſh, do exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven. *The works of the Fleſh are manifeſt*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *Adultery*, Gal. 5. 19, 20.

Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, &c. *Drunkenneſs, Revelling and ſuch like,* which are properly Sins of the Fleſh. *Of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that*
21. *they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit*
Eph. 5. 5. *the Kingdom of God.* And in another place, *For this ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Perſon, nor Covetous Man, who is an Idolater hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of*
6. *God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God on the Children of Diſobedience.* Would God be ſo ſevere, under the Diſpenſation of his Mercy to puniſh Mankind, with utter excluſion from Heaven, and eternal Miſery for Sins, which came meerly from the weakneſs of the Fleſh? Then indeed there were juſt cauſe to bewail the ſad Condition of Humanity, born under one Law to another bound, created Sick, commanded to be Sound. But God will vindicate his Juſtice at the great Day, and Mankind ſhall be fully ſatisfied, that none ſhall be damned for the meer weakneſs of the Fleſh, but for the Sins of their Will and Choice; That, as they had evil Inclinations from the Fleſh, ſo they

they had good Inclinations from the Grace of God; and the Law of their Minds, ought to have governed and kept under the Law of their Members; that others by the same Assistance which was offered to them, *have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof*; That *the Grace of God doth enable them to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World*; That, *if Men do fail of the Grace of God*, it is through their own fault; that those who relapse into sin after Repentance, and escaping the pollutions of the World, *Their latter end is worse than the beginning*; and in short, *If Men do live after the Flesh they shall die, but if through the Spirit they do mortifie the Deeds of the Body, they shall live*. All which shews, That there is so great a Possibility of subduing the Inclinations of the Flesh, that if Men neglect it, and give way to the fulfilling of them, this very thing will be imputed to them, as a wilfull and damning Sin.

Gal. 5. 24. Tit. 2. 12. Heb. 12. 15. 2 Pet. 2. 20. Rom. 8. 13.

But here the Difficulty still rises; for Christ supposes that his own Disciples even the most forward, and the best resolved might fall through the infirmity

ty of the Flesh, and they did so, upon no great Temptation; as appears by St. *Peter*'s denying his Master in so dreadful a manner, upon so slight a Provocation as the Damsels saying to him,

Matt. 26. 69. *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.* What a mean, low and timorous Spirit had possessed St. *Peter* at that time? Was this he, who but a few hours before said, That though he should die with him, he would not deny him? Lord! what is Man? *Verily, in his best Estate he is altogether Vanity.* What? St. *Peter* deny his Lord, who made that Confession of him which Christ owned was *not revealed to him by Flesh and Blood, but by his Father in Heaven*, viz. *That he was the Christ the Son of the living God?* St. *Peter*? who when other

Matt. 16. 16, 17. Disciples went back, said to Christ,

Joh. 6. 68, 69. *Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal Life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.* St. *Peter*, who was so forward to defend our Saviour, That *he drew his Sword and cut*

18. 10. *off Malchus his Ear!* For him in so little a time after to deny his Lord, not only once but twice, nay a third time, and that with Execrations upon himself!

ſelf! This ſeems to be a Sin ſo wilful, ſo deliberate, ſo preſumptuous, that if this may be excuſed through the weakneſs of the Fleſh, what may not? What then ſhall we ſay? Doth God put ſuch a difference between Perſons, that thoſe Sins are meer *Infirmities* in his account in ſome, which would be accounted preſumptuous Sins in others? No certainly, *God is a righteous Judge; and he is no reſpecter of Perſons*, for *by him Actions are weighed*; he judges things as they are here, and will judge Men according to them hereafter. Matt. 26. 74.

Was it, that he repented preſently, and wept bitterly? This was a very good Symptom, when he came to himſelf ſo ſoon, that the Diſeaſe was not deeply rooted in him; and that it was rather a ſudden Paſſion which overcame him, than a deliberate and wilful Action; which he ſhewed moſt effectually by returning to his Duty, and being more active and exemplary in it. Whereas *Judas* his Agonies of Conſcience, ended in Deſpair and Self-murder. *Ver.* 75.

But by what certain Rules may we proceed to judge what *Sins* are *Wilful* and *Preſumptuous*, and what are *Sins* of *Infirmity*, or ſuch as come from *the weakneſs of the Fleſh*.

We have two ways to judge by,

(1.) From the Nature of Moral Actions.

(2.) From the Scriptures, declaring what Sins are inconsistent with the State of Salvation. For there are two sorts of Infirmities.

(1.) Such as belong to particular Actions.

(2.) Such as belong to our State and Condition.

(1.) As to the Infirmities of particular Actions.

There are three things which do very much alter and discriminate the Nature of Moral Actions.

(1.) The Choice and Consent of the Will.

(2.) The Truce and Deliberation about it.

(3.) The Manner of Committing it.

(1.) As to the Choice and Consent of the Will. Here we are to observe two Rules,

(1.) Whatever lessens the Freedom of the Will before the Act of sin doth lessen the Guilt of it. So that, whether it be ignorance or want of Consideration, or some sudden and violent Passion, as much as it abates the Free-

dom

dom of Choice or Conſent of the Will, ſo much it takes away from the greatneſs of its Guilt. But here we muſt ſuppoſe, that which takes away the Freedom of the Will, not to be in it ſelf a ſin; for then original Corruption would be an excuſe for all other Sins which flow from it. And thoſe who have ſinned themſelves into a neceſſity of ſinning, would be able to ſin no longer; and thus the Devils themſelves, and the worſt of Men would be the leaſt of Sinners. But ſetting this aſide, the Rule holds good, that ſo far as our Choice and Conſent is taken away, ſo far the Guilt is extenuated. And from hence ſudden and violent Paſſions, Melancholy vapours, and a diſturbed Imagination do leſſen the guilt of thoſe Sins which are committed thro' the Power of them; and would not have been committed if the Perſon had been himſelf; *i. e.* capable of judging and conſidering as at other times.

(2.) The Caſe is much harder, as to what takes off from the Freedom of Conſent in the very Act of Sin. It is true there is not a Fulneſs of Conſent, where there is a Reluctancy of Conſcience in the Commiſſion of ſin: But

here is an antecedent Choice, and that after Convictions of Conſcience, and the worſt part prevails, only the other is not quite ſilent, but gives ſecret Checks, and complains of its hard uſage when it cannot overcome. Now in this Caſe a Sinner is awaken'd, and if he ſins it is againſt clear Light and ſtrong Convictions, and ſo the Act of Sin is the more aggravated; though there may be more hopes, that the Perſon may repent, becauſe Conſcience is awake in him; as there is of one that is ſenſible of his Diſeaſe, rather than of him who doth not apprehend the danger he is in. *Ariſtotle* declares, That *all thoſe who are vitious againſt their Judgments are in a State of Infirmity*; ſuch are not wicked out of Choice, as the reſt are; nor ſo good, as to overcome their bad Inclinations; but they are in a State of War with themſelves; ſometimes Reaſon and Conſcience prevail, and ſometimes vitious Inclinations; and in this Caſe, the event of the War muſt declare which is the moſt prevailing ſide. But in the mean time, the Caſe of ſuch Perſons is not deſperate but very dangerous; and their Sins only ſhew that Conſcience is alive in them but very weak,

Eth. l. 7. c. 78.

weak, and gives faint and dying Groans though it be not dead.

(2.) As to time and deliberation about the Act of Sin. If there be a real ſurprize, *i. e.* that the Perſon is not aware, or hath not time to conſider what he is to do, he that hath a Mind well reſolved, may be betrayed into what he would never have done, if he had time to deliberate about it. And, this was one great Extenuation of St. *Peter's* Fall; for, from the time of Chriſt's Arraignment he was in a diſturbance, and confuſion of thoughts; he was ſurprized to ſee Chriſt carried away in ſuch a manner to the High-Prieſts Hall; thither he follows afar off; but ſtill remembring whoſe Servants Ear he had lately cut off. While he was in this confuſion and diſorder, the Damſels Queſtion ſo ſtartled and affrighted him, that he denied his Maſter; and the Fear continuing he repeated that Denial, and added Imprecations to it. But the great Aggravation of the ſin of *Judas* was, that it was not only a deliberate Act and deſigned Wickedneſs. And in this reſpect, *David's* Adultery had greater Extenuation than his Murder; becauſe many more thoughts went

to the Commission of one than of the other; the one being committed of a sudden, the other after great Deliberation, and with much Art and Contrivance. Thus deliberate Acts of Fraud and Injustice, of Perjury and Rebellion, have a greater Aggravation than Sins committed by the force of a sudden and violent Passion. And those Passions which do most hinder Deliberation, do proportionably lessen the wilfulness of the Sin; as sudden Fear, rash Anger and the like. For, Fear betrays the succours which Reason offers; and Anger intercepts them; which storms at the first Assault, and making its impression before Reason takes the Alarm. The Philosopher determines, that it is a worse thing for a Man to be sway'd by his Lust than by his Anger; because Anger seems to be governed by Reason, but is only too hasty in its Execution; but Lust hath no regard to the Dictates of Reason: and there is less of time and Deliberation, and Contrivance in the one than in the other. But when Anger goes inward instead of breaking forth, when it gets to the Heart, it then degenerates into Malice and Revenge, and then it hath the greatest Aggravations going along with it.

Ethic. l. 6. c. 8.

(3.) As

(3.) As to the manner of Committing. If it be committed Presumptuously, it is so much the more aggravated. And that consists in these things;

(1.) The lowest degree of Presumption is, when a Sin is committed of set Purpose; not only with Deliberation but with Contrivance, Design and Resolution. Thus by the Law a Man was said *to kill his Neighbour Presumptuously*, when he lay in wait to do it. Exod. 21. 14. Thus the Psalmist opposes *presumptuous Sins*, to those which are committed through Ignorance or Inadvertency. Psal. 19. 12, 13. And where there is a Will bent and set to commit Sin, there must be an inward and secret Contempt of God and his Laws; as *Nehemiah* expresses the presumptuous sinning of their Forefathers, Neh. 9. 16, 17. *They dealt proudly and harden'd their Necks, and hearkend not to the Commandments, and refused to obey.* So that where there is obstinacy and wilful Continuance in Sin, there Men are said to *sin Presumptuously*.

If it be done with open Contempt and Defiance to God and his Law. This the Scripture calls *sinning with a high Hand*; and such who do, are said Numb. 15. 30.

to reproach the Lord, and to despise the word of the Lord. This, saith *Maimonides*, *is beyond sinning out of Inclination, or from the Power of evil Habits or Custom*; but it is with a malicious Design, to bring the Law of God into Contempt and Dishonour. And this in respect of the Gospel, is *the sinning wilfully*, which the Author to the *Hebrews* speaks of: whereby *they tread under foot the Son of God, and count the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace*: Which implies a malicious Design to reproach the Gospel.

More Nevoc. P. 3. c. 41.

Heb. 10. 26.

(2.) As to Infirmities, with respect to our present State; the meaning is, what those failings are, which are consistent with a State of Grace and Salvation now under the Gospel? To resolve this, we have but one certain Rule, that is, whatever failings are consistent with the Terms of Salvation, are allowed for Infirmities by the Gospel: And so Infirmities are opposed to such Sins, as put those who commit them out of the State of Grace and Salvation. If God were so strict under the Covenant of Grace, as to require perfect and unsinning Obedience,

ence, there could be no allowance for Infirmities, becauſe even thoſe are a breach of the Law of God, and a Deviation from a perfect Rule: And if *God ſhould be exact to mark* all Irregularities; or whatever is done amiſs, *who can ſtand* before his Tribunal? The beſt Men in the world have reaſon to pray with the Pſalmiſt, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy ſight ſhall no Man living be juſtified.* For if God were ſo ſevere to make no Abatements for Failings and Imperfections, it were impoſſible for Mankind to be ſaved. But what then doth the Goſpel mean with all its Promiſes of Salvation, and the hopes it gives of eternal Life? If Chriſt's own Diſciples were in a State of Salvation, there muſt be an allowance made for Infirmities and Imperfections, which we find them often charged with in the Hiſtory of our Saviour. What meant their vain and eager Diſputes about Superiority and Pre-eminence, and that at the moſt unſeaſonable time when they were at Table with him, juſt before his Suffering. Lord? what a time was this, for them to contend, who ſhould be accounted the greateſt! What meant that

Pſal. 130. 3.

143. 2.

Luk. 22. 24.

paſſionate

passionate Zeal in *James* and *John*, *to* Luk. 9. 54. *call for Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans*, when they knew it was not a particular dis-respect to our Saviour, which made them so rude, but the common Quarrel between the *Samaritans* and the *Jews*? How many Errors and Mistakes were they liable to, even while our Saviour taught them, and those about very weighty Points, as the Nature of his Kingdom, the necessity of his Death and Resurrection? What Fears and Dejections, and disorders were they all under upon our Saviour's apprehension, though but a little before they had all resolved to die with him, rather than forsake him?

What was there now under all these Infirmities, which made these Disciples to be in a State of Salvation? Nothing certainly, but their hearty and sincere Love to Christ, which they manifested before by their constant adhering to him; and afterwards by continuing to serve him. So that our Rule in this Case is, That whatever is consistent with the Love of Christ, and with a sincere and constant endeavour to do his Will, will be allowed for *Infirmities* under the Gospel; *i. e.* for such Irregularities which

which are consistent with a State of Salvation.

To make this Rule more useful, we must consider,

1. What Failings are not consistent with it.

2. What sort of Failings are consistent.

(1.) What Failings are not consistent. And those are of three kinds.

(1.) Such as come from an habitual Carelessness; or a general Neglect of our Duty, with respect to God and another World. When Persons do not regard what Duties they omit, or what Sins they Practise, it is impossible they should have any true Love to God, or to their own Souls. For the first thing which springs from thence is a Care to please God, without which there is no Salvation.

But there are too many in the world, who regard no more than how to live easily and pleasantly in it, a fair Estate and Reputation, and therefore avoid great and scandalous Sins, and the gross Neglect of God's publick Worship; but never mind inward and secret Sins, such as evil Habits, the violence of Passions, the vanity of their Minds; being

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ing carried away with the pleasing Temptations of a deceitful World, without serious considering, or looking into their own Temper and Disposition; which may be very vain and sensual, and therefore unfit for Heaven, though they be not remarkable for Profaneness, or any gross Impiety: But the Gospel requires a spiritual Temper, and Disposition of Soul to qualifie Persons for Heaven; and where ever that is, there will be a constant Care to avoid being overcome by the Temptations of an alluring and sinful World.

(2.) The habitual Practice of any known Sins, such I mean as the Scripture saith, *Those who commit them shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And as to these, St. *James* his Rule is, *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point he is guilty of all.*

Jam. 2.10.

This seems to be very severe Doctrine now under the Covenant of Mercy; but we are to consider, that by one Point he doth not mean any one Act of

3.2. sin; for he saith afterwards, That *in many things we offend all*; but he means any one sort, or kind of known Sins. It was a common Doctrine among the *Jews*, that if a Person were remarkable

ble for keeping any one Precept of the Law, eſpecially ſuch as reſpected God and his Worſhip, that would make amends for all the reſt; and this was the true Reaſon, why the Phariſees *made long Prayers, and* yet *devoured Widows Houſes*; for they thought the Duties of the firſt Table would excuſe the neglect of the other. But S. *James* ſaith, If a Man keep all the reſt of the Law, and yet allows himſelf in the wilful breach of any one Point, that implies ſuch a Contempt of the Lawgiver, as renders him as obnoxious to Divine Juſtice, as if he had broken the whole. But here, a great difference is to be made between a ſingle Act committed through the Power of Temptation, againſt a contrary habit of Vertue, and the habitual Practice of known Sins. It is poſſible for a ſober Man to be ſurprized into an Act of Intemperance, and to be overcome by the ſtrength of Wine; but ſee the difference between ſuch a one, and one that hath a habit of Intemperance. The one goes on in his Courſe, and hath loſt the very Senſe of his Sin, and the Power of reſiſting it, and by degrees thinks he cannot live without it; the other looks with Indignation upon himſelf for his Luk. 20. 47.

Folly;

Folly; he repents presently, and resolves to avoid all occasions of being guilty of the like Folly. And the same holds as to other Sins; if Persons do love God and their Souls, and be overcome with Temptations, they presently repent with great Sincerity, and return no more to the Practice of it.

(3.) All Acts of known Sins presumptuously committed, are inconsistent with a constant and sincere Endeavour to please God. Where there is true Friendship among Men, it is not presently broke by every Neglect, or sudden Heat and Passion; but if a Man sets himself with Study and Deliberation to affront another, that is a reasonable Cause to break off any Pretence of Friendship, because such an Action was not consistent with the love of a Friend; so it is with notorious Sins committed wilfully and deliberately, notwithstanding all the Motions to the contrary from God's Honour, and Justice and Soveraignty; and from the Commands and Threatnings of the Gospel; these are inconsistent with being in a State of Friendship with God, which is all one with a State of Salvation. Not, that all who commit them, must

muſt immediately or neceſſarily be damned for them; but tho' hereby they renounce any Title to Friendſhip with God, and all their hopes, as long as they continue in ſuch a State without true and hearty Repentance, are vain and groundleſs. And to entertain ſuch hopes notwithſtanding ſuch ſins, is properly the Sin of Preſumption: which is Confidence of anothers Favour without any Reaſon for it.

(2.) By theſe, we may now eaſily underſtand what thoſe Failings are, which the Goſpel allows for *Infirmities; viz.* ſuch which are unavoidable by us in this imperfect State, notwithſtanding a conſtant and ſincere Endeavour to pleaſe God by doing his Will, *God knoweth our frame and remembreth that we are but duſt.* Pſal. 103. 14. Not meer Duſt, for then, it were to no purpoſe to take Care to ſave our Souls; but a Mixture and Compoſition of dull, heavy, lumpiſh, Matter, and a ſprightly, vigorous, active Soul, which grows uneaſie by being fettred and clogged, and diſtracted in its beſt and freeſt Motions by it. The Soul can hardly raiſe it ſelf above this Region of Darkneſs and Temptation, and attempt a Flight towards the State of Serenity, and Happineſs

Happineſs above, but it is pulled down by that weight which hangs upon it, and diverted by the various and reſtleſs Impertinency of wandring Imaginations. The moſt watchful Mind cannot prevent all the diſorders of a roving Fancy in the midſt of our more ſerious Devotions. If we ſet our ſelves to fix our Minds upon the beſt Objects, and to prevent any wandring thoughts, the Succeſs ſeldom anſwers our Deſign, and our thoughts are gone before we are aware of it. Our Minds are like a Ship toſſed upon the rowling Waves; but although we cannot hinder their unequal Motion, we may ſteer their Courſe to the Port we aim at. But beſide the Extravagancies of Imagination, our Deſires are hard to be kept within their due Bounds; there are many Failings in our beſt Duties, great Coldneſs and Lukewarmneſs at leaſt in our Devotions, and yet too great Proneneſs to think well of our ſelves for them, though God knows our Omiſſions and Neglects are ſo many, and thoſe we do perform are ſo mean, and ſlight, that we have more cauſe to pray to God to forgive, than to hope he will accept our mean Performances. But yet I do not ſay our beſt

best Actions are Sins; for there is a real difference between Actions imperfectly good, and morally evil; in these, the Substance is bad, but in the other, the Acts themselves are good, but only lessen'd by the manner of doing them. And to these Failings in our best Actions, we must add the great unevenness in our Tempers; the Inconstancy of our Resolutions; the uneasiness of our Minds, under the Troubles of Life arising from want of due Resignation, and Submission to the Will of God; the many secret lurking Passions within us, which are called the Motions to sin; and S. *James styles, The lust which conceives and brings forth sin*; and St. *Paul, The Law in our Members warring against the Law in our Minds*, which may give a great deal of disturbance where it cannot prevail. It is a sad thing to read the Complaints of such Persons, as St. *Gregory Nazianzen*, and St. *Jerom* about the inward Motions to sin, after an Age spent in Mortifications; and when their Bodies were wither'd with Age, and broken with Diseases and hard Usage. But there is a greater Instance than these of St. *Paul* himself, who af-

Jam. 1. 15. Rom. 7. 23.

Greg. Nazian de Cal. vit. Bas. A. 389. n. 13.

ter all his Perils by Land and by Sea, after all his Watchfulneſs and Faſtings, and Prayers, yet he was forced *to keep under his Body, and to bring it in Subjection*; *leſt that by any means*, ſaith he *when I have preached to others, I my ſelf become a caſt-away.* But ſtill there is a great difference between purſuing the things of the Spirit, with the Reluctancy of the Fleſh, and purſuing the things of the Fleſh, with the reluctancy of the Spirit; the former ſhews only the Motions of the Fleſh, which being ſubdued are but Infirmities; but the latter do not ceaſe to be wilful Sins, tho' there be inward ſtruggling in the Commiſſion of them; and the prevailing Party ought to give the Denomination to the Perſon, whether carnal or ſpiritual. For, *They that are after the Fleſh do mind the things of the Fleſh, but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit.* And according to the great Deſign and Tenour of our Lives and Actions will be our Character in this World, and recompence in another. Nothing now remains, but to conclude with recommending to you the Duties of *Watchfulneſs* and *Prayer.*

1 Cor. 9. 27.

Rom. 8. 5.

(1.)

(1.) *Watchfulneſs*; which is a conſtant Care of our ſelves and Actions. We walk as it were upon Precipices, and therefore had need to look to our ſtanding, when we ſee Perſons falling on every ſide. There is no force indeed in our Caſe, becauſe we are in a State of Trial; but we live in the midſt of Snares and Temptations, and Sins which do ſo eaſily beſet us, that we cannot walk one ſtep in our way without Danger; and therefore there is continual Reaſon for Watchfulneſs. But that is not enough: For,

(2.) We muſt add *Prayer* to our *Watchfulneſs*. Otherwiſe, our Preſumption of our own ſtrength may make us fall, God will have us owe our ſtanding to his Aſſiſtance, which he hath promiſed to give upon our earneſt Prayer to him for it. No Duty more proper for us in this State of Temptation; no Duty more effectual for obtaining ſuitable Supplies for our preſent Neceſſities; where a Man falls by Temptation, St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith, it is becauſe he knew not how to Pray. For Prayer, when duely performed, not only diverts, and raiſes and compoſes the Mind, and ſo breaks the force of a preſent

Matt. 7. 7, 8, 21, 22. Mark 11. 24. Joh. 16. 24. Jam. 5. 16. 1 Pet. 3. 12. 1 Joh. 3. 22, 5. 14. Jam. 1. 12.

Temptation; but when a close Siege is laid, it keeps the Passage open for Supplies from Heaven, and brings down those Supports which may enable us so *to endure Temptation, that when we are tried we may receive the Crown of Life, which God hath promised to them that love him.*

SER-

SERMON XII.

Preached at

HAMPTON-COURT:

Before the

King and Queen.

Auguſt the 7th. 1689.

Acts XXVI. 8.

Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?

THESE words are part of the Excellent Defence, which S. *Paul* made for himſelf before King *Agrippa*, and the Roman Governour for embracing the Chriſtian Religion. And if it

were so desirable a thing to have heard S. *Paul* Preach, (as one of the Fathers of the Church thought it, when he parallel'd it with seeing Christ in the Flesh) it was especially at that time, when before so great an Audience, and upon so Solemn an occasion, he was to give an account of himself *touching all the things, whereof he was accused of the Jews*, Ver. 2. There had been a long and implacable Hatred both in the Rulers, and People of the *Jews* against him, above any other Apostle, having had greater advantages of Education among them, and being more remarkably zealous for preaching up that Doctrine, which himself had furiously opposed, and that upon a Principle of Conscience, as he saith, Ver. 9. *I verily thought with my self, that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* And such a Conscientious Persecutor would not do that which he accounted *the work of the Lord, negligently*, as he shews *Ver.* 10, 11. But that the same Person should on a sudden quit all his Hopes and Expectations among the *Jews*; and not only betake himself to a Sect so much hated and despised, as that of Christianity was; but, to be so active in all places

places for the promoting it, was a thing which did both surprize and enrage them. Insomuch, that when he came up to *Jerusalem*, a popular Tumult was soon raised against him, which had like to have cost him his Life, if the Roman Officers, had not rescued him from their Fury. But after he had made several Defences of himself, to the People, to the Council, to the Roman Governour, and found their Rage and Malice against him to continue still, when *Festus* would have sent him to *Jerusalem* to be tried, *He appeals to Cæsar*; and during this Appeal, when *Agrippa* came to visit *Festus*, hearing of this remarkable Cause, and the vehement Prosecution of it, he had a Desire to hear what S. *Paul* had to plead for himself.

21. 27, 30.

22. 1.

23. 1.

24. 1.

25. 9, 10.

But before I come to the particular Matter of his Plea, in these words, there are 2 things observable concerning him.

1. That although he knew he could not suffer in a better Cause, and had a Prospect of his Sufferings before he went to *Jerusalem*, and went thither with a Resolution to undergo any thing for the sake of Christ, yet he quitted no advantages which the Law gave him. For, when the Officer would have

20. 23, 24

scourged him, he pleaded his Freedom
22. 25, 28. as a Roman Citizen; and all such were exempted from Scourging by the *Porcian* and *Sempronian* Laws. And when he found the Design was laid to carry him back to *Jerusalem*, and there to make him a Sacrifice to the Rage of the *Jews*; he makes use of the Privilege of the Roman Laws, and before Sentence made his Appeal to *Cæsar*. So little did he think it inconsistent with the Christian Doctrine, of Suffering to make use of Legal Privileges for his own Defence, against unjust Violence.

2. That in all his Defences he insisted on the *Resurrection* as the main Point. For although the true Ground of the violent Hatred and Malice of the *Jews* against him, was his constant and zea-
Acts 17. 18. lous Preaching *Jesus and the Resurrection*, as he did at *Athens* and other places; yet those who persecute Men for the sake of Truth, always pretend some other Reason for it; and nothing is more common and plausible than that of breaking the Laws. And the *Jews* now thought they had this Advantage against S. *Paul*; for they charged
21. 28. him with profaning the Temple *by carrying a Gentile into it*; but the Matter

of

of Fact was miſtaken; however, this ſerved for a popular Pretence againſt him, and that was all they ſought for, (Malice working moſt miſchief under a Diſguiſe.) And this took preſently, and ſpread ſo ſuddenly, That it is ſaid, *All the City was moved, and the People ran together, and they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple.* When *Tertullus* pleaded againſt him, he faintly urged his going about *to profane the Temple*; but the main of his Accuſation, was, That he was a *Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarens*; therefore S. *Paul* in his Anſwer in ſhort, ſaith to the other things objected, That they could not prove them; but *as to the Way which they called Hereſie, i. e.* owning the Doctrine of Chriſt, he was ſo far from denying it, that he profeſſed it before them all. And as he declared his Faith freely, ſo he did his Hope too. *And have hope towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and unjuſt.* This was the Point S. *Paul* reduced all to. *Touching the Reſurrection of the dead, I am called in queſtion by you this day.* And ſo here to *Agrippa, And now I ſtand and am judged for the hope of the*

30.

24:6.

5.

13.

14.

15.

21.

26. 6. 7. *the Promise made of God unto our Fathers; unto which Promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come, for which Hopes sake, King Agrippa I am accused of the Jews.* And then immediately follow the words of the Text, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

Wherein we have the Strength of the Apostles Argument, to prove the Truth of this Mysterious Doctrine of the Resurrection; although artificially couched by way of Insinuation and Address.

(1.) It is not a vain thing to suppose it, because God had Promised it. For no Tradition of Fathers, no Conjectures of Philosophers, no Power of Nature could be a sufficient Foundation to build such an Article of Faith upon; nothing short of *the Promise made of God.*

(2.) It is not a new thing started by him, to disturb and perplex the Minds of Men; it was a Promise made to our Fathers, *i.e.* it was involv'd and implied in the great Promise of the Messias, and the Happiness to come by him; which was not with Respect to this World, but the World to come; the full and compleat

compleat Enjoyment whereof muſt ſuppoſe a Reſurrection of the dead.

(3.) It is not an unreaſonable thing; which appears by S. *Paul*'s putting it to them in ſuch a manner, *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe the dead?*

Wherein the Apoſtle hath ſhew'd us the true Method of aſſerting and defending the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, *viz.* not to undertake to demonſtrate things by natural Reaſon, which are uncapable of it; but firſt to prove them to be of Divine Revelation; and then to ſhew that there is no Objection from Reaſon, which can make that Revelation incredible.

And this I ſhall endeavour to make out, as to the Subject here mentioned; and that

(1.) In General, with reſpect to the Doctrine of the Reſurrection.

(2.) More particularly, (1.) As to the Reſurrection of Chriſt, (2.) As to the Reſurrection of the Dead at the great Day.

(1.) In General; as to the Doctrine of the Reſurrection.

It is no unreaſonable Method of proceeding with Mankind, to ſuppoſe ſome general Principles agreed on, before we undertake

undertake to prove particular Doctrines. For when we go about to reason at all, we must suppose the Foundations of certainty; without which it is to no purpose to undertake to convince any Man of any thing. When we prove that there is a God, we must suppose something that is without our selves, in the Frame of this visible World; and from the order of Causes, the variety of Effects, the nature of successive Beings we justly infer, that it could not be always just as it is; and therefore, it will be produced by a Being Superiour to it, whose Power must be Infinite, as giving Being to that which had none, and disposing things in such a manner as we see them. For as nothing can be without a Cause, so it is most unreasonable to suppose, that which once was not, should put it self into Being; or a blind and unactive Cause should produce such admirable Effects.

An infinite Power being then necessarily supposed, as to the Production of the World, it cannot be unreasonable to apply it to a particular Effect, although above the power of natural Causes, if it be such a one as is agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God. It

is

is an unreaſonable thing, to ſuppoſe any abſurd Doctrine to be true, becauſe God's Power is infinite. For he doth not imploy his Power, but in a way moſt agreeable to his Wiſdom; and his Wiſdom is diſcovered in the ſuitableneſs of the End, and the clearneſs of Divine Revelation.

It is as poſſible for God now *to raiſe the Dead*, as at the great Day; but we have no reaſon to believe it, becauſe it doth not now anſwer the great End of the Reſurrection, which is in order to an eternal State. Therefore altho' there be an equal Poſſibility in the thing, yet there is not an equal Credibility; becauſe this doth by no means come up to the declared Purpoſe of God's raiſing the Dead; which is of very great moment for Mankind to believe and expect.

If I could believe it poſſible, for the Body of Chriſt to be in ten thouſand places at the ſame time, (which I cannot) yet if it were not to attain ſome great and ſpiritual End, which cannot be carried on another way, I have the ſame reaſon to think it incredible, as I have to believe that God will not imploy his infinite Power, as often as a Prieſt ſhall think fit, by repeating the words

words of Conſecration. And we never find in the whole Hiſtory of Scripture the infinite and miraculous Power of God, tied to a certain Form of words; and that to no ſpiritual End, *viz.* either for the Conviction, Converſion, or Sanctification of Mankind; to which other means more proper and agreeable are appointed.

But in the Caſe of the Reſurrection of the Dead, our Saviour hath ſufficiently declared the End and Deſign of it to be ſuch, that we may juſtly ſuppoſe, that if God will imploy his infinite Power, it would be for ſuch a Purpoſe: *The hour is coming*, ſaith Chriſt, *in which all that are in the Graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good unto the Reſurrection of Life, and they that have done evil unto the Reſurrection of Damnation.*

Joh. 5. 28, 29.

Can we imagine the Power of God to be imployed for a more ſuitable End, to the Deſign of his Providence than this? It is not to make them capable of acting over again all that Folly, and Vanity and Vice, which they live in now; it is not meerly to ſhew his Power over all the ſcattered Atoms of our Bodies; and that he can when he pleaſes fetch

fetch them of their ſecret Repoſitories, and diſpoſe and unite them ſo, as to make the ſame Bodies; it is not to convince then the unbelieving part of Mankind, when they ſee that effected, which they before thought incredible; for, they who will not believe now, upon the Evidence which God hath given, ſo as to prepare themſelves for that great Day, ſhall then be forced both *to believe and tremble.*

Altho' then we do own, that without God's infinite Power we look on the Reſurrection as impoſſible, yet this ought to be no diſparagement to the Doctrine, ſince the End of it is ſuch, as doth ſo fully agree with the Wiſdom and Deſign of Providence.

It's true, the ancient Fathers who diſcourſed much to the Heathens, upon the Argument of the Reſurrection, which they thought one of the moſt incredible Parts of the Chriſtian Doctrine, do make uſe of many compariſons and Similitudes from natural Cauſes and Effects. But we are not to look on them as ſtrict Proofs, but as handſome Illuſtrations, being deſigned to take off the Scorn and Deriſion, with which the Heathens entertained the Doctrine.

Thus

Thus they ſpeak of a *Diurnal Reſurrection, viz.* Of the Day dying into Night, and being buried in Darkneſs; and in the Morning ſpringing out of its Grave of Obſcurity and Silence, with a freſh Glory and Splendour; of an *Annual Reſurrection*; when the Trees begin to have a new Life in them; and the precious Liquor which ſhoots up into the withered Body and Branches, and ſo brings forth new Leaves and Flowers, and Fruit. But after all, we know, that ſuch a Revolution of Days and Nights, and the ſeveral Seaſons of the Year, depends upon certain and natural Cauſes, *viz.* the Diurnal and Annual Courſe of the Sea. All that can be proved hence is, that things may not always remain in the ſame State of Darkneſs and Inactivity; but that the ſame God, who hath appointed the Times and Seaſons for other things, may if he pleaſe reſtore Mankind, after a long Night, and cold Winter in the Grave, to a State of Life and Vigour, at the Day of Reſurrection.

Clem. ad Cor. p. 34. *Tertul. de Reſ.* c. 13. *Ambr. Hex.* l. 5. *Cyril. Catal.* 18. &c. *Herod.* l. 2.

The Story of the *Phœnix* ſo often mentioned by the Ancients, holds well enough againſt the Authors of it (for the Chriſtians had it from the Heathens,)

viz.

viz. to prove there is no Abſurdity in believing the Poſſibility, that Life may be reſtored after the Corruption of the Body; and that they had no reaſon to deride Chriſtianity for a Doctrine, which themſelves owned in their famous Tradition of the *Phœnix*.

Sen. Ep. 42. *Plin.* l. 10. c. 2. *Tacit. An.* l. 6.

But when they argued ſtrictly about this Matter, they reſolved it into the ſame infinite Power of God, whereby he made the World. And according to the due order of our Creed, we muſt firſt believe in *God the Father, Almighty maker of Heaven and Earth*, before we are to believe *the Reſurrection of the Body*.

Athen. p. 43. *Tertul. Ap.* c. 48. *De Reſ.* c. 11. *Juſtin. Apol.* 2. *Lact.* 7. c. 23. *Ambr. de Fide Reſ.* c. 11. *Prudent. in Syr.* l. 2. *Aug. de Civ. Dei*, l. 21. c. 7. 22. c. 10. 21. *In* Pſal. 62. 139.

And although the Matters of Faith be not capable of ſtrict Demonſtrations; yet we have this ſtrong Evidence to convince Mankind of the Credibility of it, *viz.* If they do believe that God made the World, and the Bodies of Mankind at firſt, they can have no reaſon to queſtion his Power to new make them; if they do not, they muſt believe ſomething far more abſurd than the Doctrine of the Reſurrection, *viz.* that this World ſhould make it ſelf, and that all things ſhould fall into that admirable Order they are in, with-

out the Power and Management of an infinitely Wise Creatour. And setting aside the Consideration of infinite Power, such Persons ought not to find fault with asserting the Possibility of the Resurrection; for why may not the same Particles of Matter in a long Tract of time hit together again, to make up the same Body, as well, as such are at first supposed to have made up not only the visible World, but the wonderful Fabrick of any single Body of Mankind? Why should it be more incredible, that a dead Body should be raised out of its Grave, than that the Body of a Man should spring out of the Earth at first from a meer Fermentation of Matter? So that the most Atheistical Persons have no reason to reject the Doctrine of the Resurrection, as a thing incredible to them.

But yet there are some Difficulties, which deserve to be cleared, to remove any Temptations to Infidelity; and those relate,

(1.) To the quantity of the Matter to make up such a number of Bodies.

(2.) To the sorting and Distribution of it for the making so many distinct Bodies, as were before.

(1.) As

(1.) As to the quantity of Matter; not as to the main Body of the Earth (out of the duſt whereof Man's Body was framed at firſt) but as to that which makes up the Bodies of Men as now they are. And I think one Obſervation is ſufficient to clear the Difficulties which relate to this: that what paſſes away from us by inſenſible Tranſpiration, was once as really a part of our Body, as that is moſt viſible and diſcernible in us now, or will be when our Bodies corrupt in the Grave, and are turned into Duſt. I need not run to the *Statick Experiments* to prove the vaſt quantity of Matter belonging to our Bodies, which paſſes continually away from us; for there is one thing which ſufficiently proves it, and no Body can doubt of; and that is; we find all Perſons grow and ſhoot up till they come to ſuch a Stature; and when they are attained to it, all the Art and Contrivance, and Nouriſhment they can uſe, cannot make any addition to it. To what a prodigious height would Mankind grow, if every ſeven years they ſhould ſhoot up in Proportion to the firſt Seven? And if thoſe parts which receive Nouriſh-

ment did not ſpend themſelves, all Men, when they ceaſe growing upwards muſt have a vaſt Bulk. For they take in greater Nouriſhment, than when they ſhot up ſo faſt. But we find it otherwiſe in Mankind, and therefore thoſe which were once the real parts of the Body do inſenſibly go off and ſpend themſelves, and others come in their room. And thoſe which were the ſubſtantial Parts of the ſame Body, are ſcattered up and down in our Atmoſphere, being wholly indiſcernable by us, but yet they are not annihilated, nor loſt to infinite Wiſdom; who ranges and diſpoſes thoſe minute Particles of our Bodies in ſuch order, that he can command them together, as he pleaſes, and ſo make up the ſame Body again. But this carries me to the ſecond Difficulty.

(2.) As to the ſorting and diſtribution of theſe diſperſed Particles, into ſo many diſtinct Bodies again. It is but a mean Repreſentation of the Poſſibility of this, which the Chymiſts boaſt off, *viz.* that they can reduce ſome Metalline Bodies to their own ſhapes, and natural appearances from thoſe wonderful Diſguiſes they can put them into.

into. But from thence we may infer, that the infinitely Wise God knows all the secret passages of Nature, and every small part of a Body, and can trace it through all its Changes and Shapes, and bring it back again to unite, with the other parts of the same Body. The truth is, we are mighty Strangers to the invisible Kingdom of Nature; we make a shift to talk and reason a little about the Frame and Contexture of gross and visible Bodies; but for those innumerable Parts which are out of the reach of our Senses, we know they must be, and are somewhere, but in what Order and Variety we know not. But this we know, that the most minute parts we can discern by the help of Glasses, although they appear rough and deformed to our naked Eyes, as the Moss which grows upon the Earth, yet when it is more narrowly searched into by the help of Glasses, is found to have in it admirable Beauty and Curiosity. And it is very observable that the more we look into the Works of Art, the less we admire them; but the more we search into, what we account the most disorderly and confused parts of Nature, even the least and most

contemptible, the more we are ſurprized with admiration. Which ſhews the infinite Wiſdom of the Maker of all things, who hath all thoſe things in due Order, which ſeem to us impoſſible to be ſorted or numbred. And ſince God hath declared it to be his Deſign to raiſe the Bodies of the Dead, we have no reaſon to queſtion, but that he diſpoſes the ſeveral parts of them ſo, as none ſhall be either loſt or miſlaid. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of *a Book* in God's keeping, *wherein all our Members are written, which in continuance were faſhioned, when as yet there was none of them.* And he hath a Book too, wherein all the ſcattered parts of the Body are enter'd, which he knows exactly, and ſo can eaſily bring them together. We all know, that if the leaves of a Book are ſcattered up and down thro' many hands, and carried to the moſt diſtant places; if the Author of it knows where they are, although they were bound up in other Books, yet he can eaſily find out the ſeveral parts of it, and put them together again, ſo, as to make the ſame entire Book which they were before. If therefore, God certainly knows and diſpoſes the ſeveral

Pſal. 139. 16.

ral parts of our Bodies (for although they are under many Diſguiſes to us, they are under none, to him) he can much more eaſily gather them and joyn them together, as his Wiſdom and Power is infinitely greater than ours. But Suppoſe the parts of one Body be turned into the Subſtance of another, as in thoſe who eat Man's Fleſh, how is it poſſible there ſhould be diſtinct Bodies, when the Subſtance of one goes into the Subſtance of another?

This hath been thought by ſome a terrible Objection, againſt the Poſſibility of the Reſurrection; but, according to the Principles I have already laid down, it will admit of a clear and diſtinct Anſwer. For,

(1.) The Difficulty would appear much greater, if there were any ſuch *Cannibals* in the World, as lived wholly upon Man's Fleſh. It cannot be denied, that there are Inſtances of People ſo rude and barbarous, as to account it a piece of Gallantry to devour their Enemies, whom they have taken in Battle; and of others, who by extremity of Famine have been driven to it. But ſuch extraordinary Inſtances have no force againſt a general Doctrine;

unleſs it be proved to be impoſſible by them; for, againſt extraordinary Caſes, extraordinary Care may be ſet to make up the parts of thoſe Bodies. But,

(2.) It is but a very inconſiderable part of one Body, which in ſuch Caſes goes into the Subſtance of another. That which may ſtop a ravenous Appetite, may go but a little way towards increaſing the Subſtance of the Body. How little of what we take into our Stomachs, is united to the ſolid parts of the Body. The Fleſh is diſſolved into a ſpirituous Liquor, which at laſt turns to a Nouriſhment; but after many Paſſages and refinings in the ſeveral Veſſels for that purpoſe, the groſſer part, and far greater quantity going off. So that according to the moſt received Doctrine of Nutrition, ſuppoſe the Body of a Man were eaten by *Cannibals*, a very ſmall part of it, would paſs into the Subſtance of their Bodies.

(3.) Suppoſe there were more, yet there cannot be ſo much as is already gone off from the Body of the ſame Man. If a Man lives to thirty or forty years, his Body hath undergone many new Repairs in that time, and all the

old

old Materials were as true and real parts of the Body, as the new ones; and yet it is the ſame Body, in the ſenſe of all Mankind. Why ſhould it not be then the ſame Body at the Day of Reſurrection, if ſome of the parts before conſumed, be taken to make it up, as well as thoſe very individual parts which a Man had at the time of his Death. Suppoſe a corpulent Man to fall into lingring Diſeaſes, or a gradual Conſumption of all the parts of his Body, muſt this Man at the Day of Reſurrection, have no more as belonging to his Body, than he had left upon him at the hour of his Death? Would it not be the ſame Body, if it were made up of the parts he had at the beginning of his Conſumption? If it be, then the ſame Reaſon will hold as to other times of his Life; and ſo this mighty Objection from the *Cannibals* devouring thoſe parts of the Body, which a Man had at the time of his Death can be of no force to overthrow the Poſſibility of the Reſurrection.

(2.) Having thus endeavour to clear the Notion of the Reſurrection in general; I come to the particular Conſideration of it,

(1.) With

(1.) With respect to the Resurrection of Christ; which St. *Paul* had here a regard to; that being the chief Point contested at that time between the Jews and the Apostles; as the Foundation
1 Cor. 15. 14. both of the *Faith and Hope of* Christians. For, saith St. *Paul*, *If Christ*
2 Pet. 1. 3. *be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain.* And St. *Pe-*
Rom. 1. 4. *ter*, That *they are begotten again to a lively Hope through the Resurrection of*
Act. 5. 31. *Jesus Christ from the dead.* It was by this, saith St. *Paul*, That *he was declared to be the Son of God with Power:* It was by this, saith St. *Peter*, *that God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour to give Repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.* And therefore the Apostles after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost upon them, insist chiefly upon this Point; and that not in distant places at first, where Circumstances could not be known or examined; but at *Jerusalem*, while all things were fresh in their Memories, and all Matters of Fact might be strictly examined. Thus St. *Peter* on the Day of Pentecost, *standing up with the eleven* said, *Ye Men*
Act. 2. 14. *of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, hearken unto my words.* And then follows

follows his Charge upon them for the Death of Chriſt; *Jeſus of Nazareth a Man approved of God, him have ye taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and ſlain.* And what then? *Whom God hath raiſed up.* This might ſeem incredible to them at firſt hearing; but St. *Peter* goes on, and having proved it foretold by *David* he ſaith again, *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up:* But how doth this appear? *Whereof*, ſaith he, *we all are witneſſes*, *i. e.* We that ſtand here before you, and are ready to undergoe any Trial of our Sincerity in the Matter; we do not tell you of Witneſſes that live at a great diſtance, but we whom you ſee and hear, teſtifie what we have ſeen and heard. If you are unſatisfied go and ſearch the Monument, where his Body was laid; examine the Soldiers that were to guard it; go to the Council and let them ſearch into the bottom of it; here we ſtand and are ready to give our utmoſt Teſtimony to the Truth of it. Not long after, as *Peter* and *John* were going into the Temple, and a great number of People were gathered together upon a Miracle wrought by them, St. *Peter* again tells them, That

22. 23. 24. 32.

they

they had killed the Prince of Life, whom
3. 15. *God hath raiſed up from the Dead, where-*
of we are Witneſſes. This extremely
4. 1, 2. galled the *Prieſts and Sadducees* preſent, as
5. appears afterwards, and *they ſeized upon them*, and the next day a ſolemn Council was called to examine them. But do they flinch from their Teſtimony then? No; ſo far from it, that St. *Peter* ſpeaks more boldly to them;
8. *Ye Rulers of the People, and Elders of*
Iſrael: be it known unto you all, and to
10. *all the People of Iſrael, that by the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified whom God raiſed from the Dead, even by him doth this Man ſtand here before you whole.* Could any thing be ſpoken, with more Freedom and Plainneſs than this? The Perſon whom ye crucified God, hath raiſed from the Dead; and thereby hath demonſtrated your Wickedneſs and Folly; he whom ye ſlighted and killed, even now he works Miracles among you; for by him doth this Man ſtand here before you whole. Could any thing be more provoking to them than this? Why was not the Matter at firſt examined. And if there had been any occaſion to ſuſpect them, never were men more concerned to lay open

open an Impoſture than theſe were. Why were not other Witneſſes produced againſt them, and the whole Contrivance then laid open to prevent any farther miſchief? But like guilty Men they durſt not go farther into it; only they endeavoured to ſtop their mouths, and charged them *not to ſpeak at all, or teach in the name of Jeſus.* 8.

But this would not do their Buſineſs; for they anſwered, *They could not but ſpeak the things which they had ſeen and heard.* After this, we find them brought before the Council again; and then they ſeverely rebuked them for breaking their command, to which the Apoſtles anſwered with great Temper and Conſtancy, *We ought to obey God rather than Man,* and immediately tell them the ſame things, *The God of our Fathers raiſed up Jeſus, whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree. And we are his Witneſſes of theſe things.* No wonder that it follows, that when they heard it, *they were cut to the heart*; for nothing is ſo *cutting* as a true Charge of Guilt; when Perſons cannot anſwer it, nothing can be more uneaſie than to be told of it. And inſtead of examining the Matter farther, they take *Gameliel*'s Counſel, and let them alone. 20. 5. 27. 28. 30. 32. 33.

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This I the rather inſiſt upon, becauſe the Matters were then freſh, the Perſons were alive, who were moſt concerned to diſprove them, and the Apoſtles urged them before that Council, which had not long before contrived and porcured the Death of Chriſt, and took great Care to prevent the taking away of the Body when it was in the Monument.

And now, *Why ſhould it be thought by any, a thing incredible that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?* When there were ſuch early, and ſuch conſtant Witneſſes of it; who offered the Proof of it to all ſorts, and wrought Miracles to confirm their Credibility. What can the moſt incredulous Mind ſuggeſt towards the taking away the force of their Teſtimony? There are but two ways to do it,

(1.) To ſuppoſe them honeſt and well meaning Men, who were deceived by their own Fancies.

(2.) To ſuppoſe them, cunning and deſigning Men, who went about to deceive the World, with what they did not believe themſelves.

(1.) To ſuppoſe them deceived themſelves. All that hath been ſuggeſted

geſted in this Cavilling and Sceptical Age to this Purpoſe, is that the Scripture it ſelf owns, that ſome good Men have been deceived in the ſame manner; as *Abraham* and *Lot* taking the Angels for Men, and believing that they did eat. But I will make it plain, that there was a vaſt Diſparity in the Caſe. For, B. S. Ep. 23. 25. Gen. 18. 8. 19. 3.

(1.) Here was a true and real Body without Diſpute, for it is not denied that Chriſt did really ſuffer on the Croſs, and was dead and buried. But what became of the true Body of Chriſt? In the other Caſes, either there was no real Body at all; but the Angels aſſumed ſuch Matter for the time, which had all the appearances of Humane Bodies in ſpeaking, walking, and eating; or if the Bodies were real, yet we read nothing as to any ſuch Circumſtances, of dying and being buried, as there are about Chriſt's Body. And there are ſome remarkable Circumſtances as to the Body of Chriſt, which ought to be obſerved.

1. That there was infallible Proof, that he was really dead; by the Teſtimony St. *John* gives of his ſeeing the Soldier pierce the *Pericardium* with his Launce; Joh. 19. 34.

Launce; which all agree to be a mortal and incurable Wound, if there had been Life before, and he adds it becauſe there were then ſome, who denied that he really died on the Croſs.

2. That his Body was laid in a new Sepulchre, cut out of a Rock; which is taken notice of by three Evangeliſts; becauſe it was not liable to any ſuſpicion of Practiſes by his Diſciples, as to the conveying away of the Body by any other way, than by the mouth of the Sepulchre.

Matth. 27. 60. Mark 15. 46. Luk. 23. 51.

3. That the mouth of the Sepulchre was cloſed up with a Stone; which was Sealed, and had a Watch ſet to Guard it, ſo that here was all imaginable Care taken to prevent any taking away the Body out of the Sepulchre.

Matth. 27. 66.

(2.) The Proofs as to the Truth of Chriſt's individual Body, after the Reſurrection are quite of another Nature from thoſe of the Angels appearing to eat with *Abraham* and *Lot*, for this was a ſudden Action of theirs, and not the main thing intended by them: It was only to introduce the Meſſage they had to declare; but in the Caſe of our Saviour, the great buſineſs was to aſſure them

them of the Truth of his Reſurrection. Therefore it is ſaid, *That he ſhew'd himſelf alive after his Paſſion by many infallible Proofs, being ſeen of them forty days.* Among theſe Proofs St. *John* inſiſts upon his ſhewing them, his Hands and his Side; but this would not ſatisfie *Thomas*, but he muſt thruſt his Hand into his Side. Could there be greater Proof of the ſame Body than this? So that either we muſt give over all Evidences and Proof of the ſame Body; or we muſt allow that it was given in the Caſe of Chriſt's Body. And nothing but obſtinate Infidelity can make any objection againſt the way of Proof, ſuppoſing the Matter of Fact to be true, as the Evangeliſts relate it. Act. 1. 3. Joh. 20. 20. 27.

(2.) But if that be not allow'd, then they muſt be charged with a Deſign to deceive and abuſe the World, To which I ſhall only ſay at preſent theſe two things:

1. That endleſs Suſpicion is a very unreaſonable thing; where there is no Foundation for it; as none can be aſſigned as to the Apoſtles, either as to this World or another; ſince they declare no hopes of recompence hereafter, and no Compenſation to be expected here.

2. That ſome Proof of Sincerity muſt be allow'd; and they offer'd the faireſt; and that is the true Reaſon why Chriſt appeared to them, and not to his Enemies.

Luk. 24. 37. (1.) The Diſciples themſelves were afraid of being deceived this way; and
Act. 1. 3. therefore could not be convinced, till by many *infallible Proofs* as St. *Luke* calls them, they were ſatisfied it was the real Body of Chriſt. If it had been only a ſudden and tranſient Appearance, there might have been ſome cauſe to have ſuſpected it; but this was ſo far from it, *that he converſed among them forty days at ſeveral times; he*
Luk. 24. 39. *ſhew'd them his hands and his feet, his*
Joh. 20. 20, 27. *fleſh and bones, and the very holes in his ſide* which the Spear had made. And what Proof can be given of the Truth of a Body greater than this? If they had pretended, that after his Reſurrection, his Body was preſent, but after the manner of a Spirit, *i. e.* after an inviſible, impalpable, unintelligible manner, the World would have deſpiſed their Teſtimony, and there had been no need to have ſaid more for rejecting it, than that if Body and Spirit be to be known aſunder, it muſt be by

by the different Properties; and therefore to confound them, is to confound our knowledge of them.

(2.) It was neceſſary that there ſhould be ſuch Witneſſes, who would atteſt what they ſaw; which his Enemies and Murderers would not have done, if he had appeared to them. Can we imagine, that the High Prieſts and Elders, and his other implacable Enemies, who had Blaſphemouſly attributed his other Miracles to the Power of the Devil, would immediately have been convinced upon the ſight of his Body after the Reſurrection? No doubt, by the ſame Reaſon they would have concluded it to have been an Apparition of the Devil.

(3.) There muſt be ſome Proof of the Honeſty, and Sincerity of Mankind allow'd; and the Apoſtles gave the greateſt that ever Men did; by their Self-denial, Unanimity, Courage, Patience, Conſtancy and Perſeverance. They almoſt all laid down their Laws to atteſt this Truth, and all underwent great Perſecutions for it, when the Diſcovery of the leaſt Fraud would not only have ſet them at eaſe, but gained them a plentiful Reward. And there-

fore, *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe his Son from the Dead?*

(2.) We muſt conſider this, with Reſpect to the general Reſurrection of the Dead. What Reaſon can we have to think, that *incredible*, when God hath already given ſuch an Evidence of the Poſſibility of the thing by the Reſurrection of Chriſt? He that can raiſe up one Body, can raiſe the reſt, ſince the difficulty lies not in the number of Bodies, but in the Nature of the thing. Some have ridiculouſly queſtion'd, whether the Surface of the Earth would be large enough to hold all the Bodies of Mankind upon it at the Day of Reſurrection. But an ingenious Perſon hath demonſtrated the Folly of ſuch an Imagination.

Sir W. Petty's Eſſay in Political Arithmetick. Poſtſcript.

And it cannot be thought a needleſs Exerciſe of Divine Power, when it is in order to the general Judgment, and the Reſurrection of Chriſt was intended as a Pledge and Aſſurance to the World, not only of that day to come, but that Chriſt is appointed to be the Judge. *Becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World in righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained,*

Act. 17. 31.

ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.

What remains then, but for us to think it our greatest Concernment to live as becomes those, that believe we must not only die, but be raised from the Dead, by the mighty Power of God; and that in order to *our appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that we may receive according to to things done in the Body, whether good or bad. What manner of Persons ought we then to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? What fruit had* ye then, saith St. *Paul, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* As though the bare Reflection of a Man's own Conscience were enough to make him sensible of the Folly of Sin. But what then is it to consider, That those things which will not bear a severe Reflection at home, shall be laid open before the Judgment Seat of Christ? We are now to palliate and disguise, and conceal our Follies, and Weaknesses here, as much as we can from our selves, as well as others; we would fain keep upon good Terms with our selves, and use too many Arts to blind and deceive our own Con-

2 Cor. 5 10. 2 Pet. 3. 11. Rom. 6. 21.

ſciences. But alas! How vain and fooliſh a thing is it, for us to deceive our ſelves to our own Deſtruction? If the Judge at the great Day would judge juſt as we do, it would be the beſt Argument in the World for deceiving our ſelves. But *he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.* Not according to the vain Opinions Men have of themſelves, not according to the raſh Cenſures, or indiſcreet Flatteries of others, who cannot be able to judge of us, as we may do of our ſelves. And this is a Matter of the greateſt Importance to us; ſince God is pleaſed to leave it ſo much to our own Judgment, That *if we judge our ſelves, we ſhall not be judged.* Let us not therefore do it careleſsly, partially and ineffectually; but deal faithfully, and ſincerely with our ſelves; ſearching for our moſt ſecret and beloved Sins, and proceed againſt them in ſuch a manner, as we ſhall wiſh we had done when we appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt. Think with your ſelves then, how ſhall we then abhor thoſe Sins of the Body, which will expoſe both Soul and Body, to the eternal Vengeance of God? How ſhall we be aſhamed to have

Act. 17. 31.

1 Cor. 11. 31.

have yielded ſo much, and ſo eaſily to the Inclinations of it, againſt the Convictions of Reaſon, the Checks of Conſcience, and the plain Commands of Scripture? And therefore, the thoughts of that day ſhould have the moſt powerful Influence on us, to keep our Bodies in ſubjection to our Minds, and to ſubdue the irregular Appetites that come from them. For theſe Bodies of ours now, are not ſo much Companions, as Traitors to our Souls; holding a Correſpondence with their greateſt Enemies, ſuggeſting Counſels which tend to their Deſtruction; and the Temptations which ariſe from them, are ſo many and ſo bewitching, that without a conſtant Care, our Bodies may prove the ruin of our Souls. And thoſe who have the greateſt Command over them, have enough to do, to keep under the Paſſions that ariſe from them; which may grow troubleſome when they cannot Govern; and like diſcontented Perſons be very uneaſie when they are not gratified to their own Deſire.

It is therefore, a great ſatisfaction to the Minds of good Men, to think, there is a Day of Reſurrection coming, when their Bodies ſhall no longer be an in-

cumbrance, or a Temptation to their Minds; they ſhall neither hinder their Happineſs, nor draw them from it. Thus all the dark Temptations, and cloudy Vapours, and diſturbing Paſſions, which ariſe from our Bodies now, ſhall be ſcattered and diſperſed; and there ſhall be nothing but Purity, Serenity and Clearneſs in that State. For, Then *the righteous ſhall ſhine forth like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*; when the glorious Light within ſhall break through the Paſſages of the Body, and cauſe as great a Splendour in it, as the Sun it ſelf would have within ſo narrow a Compaſs. Thus it is ſaid of our Saviour upon his Tranſfiguration, That *his Face did ſhine as the Sun*; and yet his Body then, had the ſame Qualities that our's have now. But after the Reſurrection, the glorified Bodies ſhall be ſo purified and refined, by a Divine Spirit and Power, that they ſhall become as *Spiritual* as Bodies can be; *i. e.* without corruption and decay; without Wearineſs and Pain; without any of thoſe Infirmities, which make Life ſo uneaſie here. Sometimes here the Mind hath ſuch a load upon it, that makes the Body ſink under its weight;

Matt. 13. 43.

Matt. 17. 2.

1 Cor. 15. 42.

weight; but there the perfect Eaſe and Tranquility of the Mind, will give a new Life and Vigour to the Body. Here the moſt refined Pleaſures of Life, are ſuch which ariſe from a brisk and uniform Motion of the Animal Spirits; but then the Spirit and Joy of another World, will afford ſuch Delights as infinitely exceed our preſent Imagination. Such Delights which ſhall be pure and conſtant, without Interruption, and without End. For in that *glorious Preſence of* God, there is *fulneſs of Joy; and at his right hand are Pleaſures for evermore.* Pſal. 16. 11.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

Preached at

WORCESTER

August the 17th. 1690.

Eccles. VII. 16.

Be not Righteous overmuch, neither make thy self over wise: Why shouldst thou destroy thy self?

BE not Righteous overmuch. Can there be the least Danger of that, in such a corrupt and degenerate Age as we live in? And if our Preaching ought to be about the most seasonable Duties, and the most dangerous Sins; one would think this should be one of the last Texts in Scripture, we should have occasion to Preach upon. But such an Imagination arises from

from not understanding the Scope and Design of these words. For if Righteousness were to be taken here, for that which *Solomon* calls so, *viz. The true fear of God*, it would be hard to reconcile him to himself; and these Expressions with the main Design of this Book. For, after all the Representations he hath made of the Good and Evil of this Life, he concludes thus, *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter, fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.* And he gives a most weighty Reason for it; *for God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* But then, how can any Man *fear God and keep his Commandments too much?* And the wise Man saith, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.* But how can any be over wise in the knowledge of God, and doing his Will? And the righteous Man is generally taken by *Solomon*, for a truly good Man; so Ver. 15. *There is a just Man that perisheth in his Righteousness, and there is a wicked Man that prolongeth his Life in his Wickedness*; where the Opposition

12, 13, 14.

Prov. 9. 10.

on is plain between a righteous and a wicked Man. How then, can any one be *righteous overmuch?* And, if not; what is the meaning of these words?

Some think that they are spoken in the Person of an Epicurean, who despised all Religion, and thought it useful for nothing, but to make Mens Lives uncomfortable to them, and so to shorten their days; and that the next Verses are an answer to them, by shewing that Wickedness doth much rather do it. There is a Truth, and that very considerable in this Sense, *viz.* that Wickedness doth Men more mischief as to this World, than the most strict and severe Piety; which, altho' it seems uneasie to the Body, yet it is far from being so destructive to it, as Wickedness is, and rather tends to support it, by taking off all such Extravagancies which are so apt to shorten and destroy Mens Lives, by their procuring Peace and Satisfaction. But I cannot see how this comes in, as spoken by another Person; and the only Reason of it is, the Supposition, that taking them otherwise, they are not capable of a true and proper Sense. But there may be several Accounts given

of

of them, if we take them as ſpoken by *Solomon*, in his own Name,

(1.) With reſpect to Providence. (2.) To Religion. (3.) To moral Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom.

(1.) They muſt ſeem to refer to the Method of God's dealing with good and bad Men in this World; of which he ſpake, Verſe 15. Be not too ſtrict and ſevere in paſſing Judgment on God's Providence; be not more righteous and wiſe than God is; do not think you could govern the World better than he doth; pry not too far into thoſe Myſteries, which are too deep for you; why ſhouldſt thou confound thy ſelf? So ſome interpret the latter words.

(2.) They may refer to Religion; but then they are not to be underſtood of what is truly and really ſo; but of what paſſes in the World for it; and Men may eſteem themſelves very much for the ſake of it. For although Men cannot exceed in the main and fundamental Duties of Religion, in the Belief and Fear, and Love of God; yet they may, and often do miſtake in the Nature, and Meaſures, and Bounds of what they account Duties of Religion.

3. They

(3.) They may be taken in a moral Sence for that *Righteouſneſs* which Men are to ſhew towards each other, both in Judgment and Practiſe; and for that *Wiſdom*, which Mankind is capable of, as a moral Vertue; and in both theſe, there are extremes to be avoided; and ſo they are not to be *righteous overmuch; nor to make themſelves over wiſe.*

There are Three things therefore to be ſpoken to, for clearing the Senſe of theſe words,

(1.) How we may exceed our Bounds concerning the *Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom* of Providence.

(2.) How, with reſpect to Religion.

(3.) How, with reſpect to moral Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom.

9. 1, 2. (1.) With reſpect to Providence: The great Difficulty lies in what the wiſe Man ſaith, afterwards, *That the righteous and the wiſe, and their Works are in the hand of God; no Man knoweth Love or Hatred by all that is before him. All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, &c.* Now this ſeems hard to reconcile to the Juſtice, and Wiſdom of Providence.

dence. But we have ſufficient Reaſon to forbear cenſuring and prying too far, into theſe Matters, from theſe Conſiderations;

(1.) God is not accountable to us for what he doth. The Pſalmiſt tells us, God's *Judgments are a great deep*; and therefore, it is a vain thing for us to pretend to go to the bottom of them. St. *Paul*, who had great Advantages above others Cryes out, *How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out?* We ought rather to admire, than to ſearch into what he declares *unſearchable*; and to ſit down patient under our Ignorance, when he ſaith, *his Ways are paſt finding out*. The wiſe and righteous God hath Reaſons and Methods of Acting far above our reach; and we do but ſhew our own Folly, when we pretend to give an account of them.

Pſal. 36. 6.

Rom. 11. 33.

(2.) We have reaſon to be ſatisfied, that his Providence is Righteous and Wiſe, although we cannot comprehend it. For, as *Abraham* ſaid in this Caſe, *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* He who is the great and wiſe God, who loveth Righteouſneſs and hateth Iniquity, cannot Act otherwiſe, but

Gen. 18. 25.

but in a way agreeable to infinite Wisdom and Righteousness. If these were not the Perfections of his Nature, he could not be God; and if they be, he can never do any thing repugnant to them. And as long as we own him to be God, we must allow his Wisdom and Righteousness in all he doth.

(3.) He hath declared, That he will give satisfaction to all Mankind, concerning the Secrets of his Providence. But not in this World; and therefore, we ought with Patience to wait, for *the day of the Revelation of the righte-*
Rom. 2. 5. *ous judgment of God.* It is then great Boldness and Presumption in us to censure his Proceedings, before that day comes. And so I pass to the second Sense.

(2.) These words may be taken with respect to Religion; and here it is necessary to shew, in what Sense this is to be understood. For, those who have no love to Religion, think a little too much, and are glad to find such Expressions as these to justifie their gross Neglect and Contempt of it. But to prevent Mistakes, I shall endeavour these things: To shew, that if Religion be rightly understood, there

is

is no fear of Men's doing too much in it.

(2.) That by reaſon of Mens Miſtakes and falſe Notions about it, they may eaſily exceed their due Bounds.

(1.) That if Religion be rightly underſtood, there is no Danger of exceeding the Bounds of it.

That I may ſpeak more diſtinctly; we are to conſider Religion in general, as comprehending all the Duties we owe to God; which are of a different Nature.

(1.) There are ſome Duties which are fundamental and neceſſary in our Minds, without which we can have no Religion; ſuch are the owning God for our Creator, and Governour, and depending upon him for our Happineſs.

(2.) Some are External and Occaſional; which being poſitive Duties, are capable of different Obligations, according to the Circumſtances of Perſons. And according to theſe we may lay down two Rules.

(1.) None can do too much, as to inward and fundamental Duties of Religion.

(2.) None can do too much, as to the external and poſitive Duties, while

they keep to that Obligation, which God hath laid upon them, or they have justly laid on themselves.

(1.) As to internal and fundamental Duties; as owning God and our Dependence upon him for our Happiness; as being the Supreme Good, and therefore only capable of making us Happy. And there is so great a Necessity of this in order to our Welfare, that we cannot exceed in it; since we are his Creatures, and are utterly unable to make our selves in the least Happy without him. And if we take this Dependence upon God in all the parts of it, we shall find we cannot go beyond our Duty in it. For, it implies these things,

(1.) A clear and strong Conviction of our Minds, that God alone can make us Happy. And this we can never be too much convinced of; yea all the Arguments in the World are few enough, to settle our Minds about it. Which appears by the great Pains, the wise Man takes in this Book to convince Mankind, that there is nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit to
Eccles. 1. be found here. This he delivers upon
14. his own Experience, after all the Searches,

Searches, and Pain, and Care, and Contrivances he had uſed about it. And after that, he gives an account of the ſeveral Conditions of Life, and ſhews that there is no Satisfaction to be had in any of them; and he puts the utmoſt can be ſuppoſed, that a Man enjoy a long and proſperous Life, yet that is ſo inconſiderable to the future State, that it bears no Proportion, and therefore we ought to look above, and beyond this State, if we would be Happy. 2. 11. 11. 1.

(2.) A due Senſe of God upon our Minds; which he calls *remembring our Creator*. For, although there be ſufficient Evidence of his Being, yet we are too apt to forget him, there being ſo many other things to put him out of our Minds; and therefore, at all times we need to be called upon, to remember our Creator; but eſpecially in the time of Youth, when the Vanities and Pleaſures, and Temptations of the World, have the greateſt reliſh with us; and when the things of Religion are moſt apt to be deſpiſed; yet even then we cannot be too much put in mind of our Duty, with reſpect to God. Becauſe an early Senſe of God will 12. 1.

prevent a deal of Evil; and lay a Foundation for the greateſt Peace of our Minds, and the beſt Conduct of our Peace.

(3.) A conſtant regard to God, in the Courſe of our Actions. Not meerly, that we ought to be concerned for his Honour, on whom we depend; but we muſt conſider, what he hath commanded, and what he hath forbidden, and upon what Terms: For, God ought to preſcribe to us the Conditions of our Happineſs; and it is a vain thing to expect it in any other way. Therefore we can never be too ſolicitous about ſuch things, which our eternal Happineſs depends upon. Becauſe a miſcarriage herein is the moſt fatal. We cannot be too much concerned about the Sincerity of our Repentance, and Faith, and Obedience to Chriſt, becauſe theſe are the plain and neceſſary Conditions of our Salvation; and we cannot watch our ſelves too much, againſt the Temptations to Sin; which is the greateſt Enemy to our Happineſs, and yet we are in continual Danger of falling into it, and of continuing it. And when the Danger is ſo great, ſo near, ſo conſtant, we can never exceed in the

the Watchfulneſs and Care of our ſelves.

(4.) Inward Love and Affection to God; without which there can be no Happineſs in him. For that muſt ſuppoſe Union and mutual Satisfaction. But how can we poſſibly exceed in this, when God deſerves ſo much more than we can give him? And he requires no leſs from us, *than our whole Heart, and Soul, and Strength?* Which doth not only imply Integrity, but Vigour in our Affection towards him. And to content our ſelves with a mean degree of Love, is to ſhew, that we neither know, nor eſteem him, as we ought; for the more we known him, we muſt love him the more. So that in the great and fundamental Duties of Religion we can never do too much. Deut. 10. 12.

(5.) Patient Submiſſion to the Will of God, under all the Accidents of Life. The utmoſt Care we can uſe, cannot alter the common Methods of Providence; and here all things happen alike to all. Therefore we cannot too much wean our ſelves from the uncertain Comforts of this Life; nor too much reſign our ſelves up to God's diſpoſal. We have always Paſſions enough within us to

keep us in Exercise; and Trials enough without us to put us upon subduing those Passions, which are too apt upon every Cross and Disappointment to fly out, and to grow uneasie. Here is therefore work enough for us to do; and is like to be so, as long as our Bodies and Souls are together in this State. And he that thinks he can do too much in this Work, never yet understood what the Government of his Passions meant.

(6.) A sincere Endeavour to please God, in the Duties of his Worship and Service. For, since God hath appointed such Duties, no Man can pretend to depend upon him for his Happiness, who is not sincerely willing to please him, in doing what he hath appointed for his Service; and that in such a manner, as himself hath required. Under the Law, God was very punctual and particular in his *Institutions*; and that as to all the Circumstances of them, and then he expected to be obeyed according to his own Appointments, and added a severe Sanction to his Law; *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in every thing written in the Law to do it.* And he required great

Deut. 27. 26. Gal. 3. 10. Deut. 6. 17.

Diligence

Diligence and Care in the keeping all his Commandments; ſo that then they could not be righteous over much, with reſpect to the Law of God; for all their Care was little enough to perform it. Under the Goſpel, God that hath taken away the rigorous Diſpenſation, and inſtead thereof, he requires a reaſonable Service; which doth not only conſiſt in the Acts of our Minds; but in the moſt reaſonable Duties of Religion; in Prayers and Praiſes, and Sacraments; which ought to be performed by us, with that Diligence and Devotion, as requires our greateſt Care; and in that, we cannot exceed.

(2.) And this leads me to conſider the Rules and Meaſures we are to go by in external and poſitive Duties.

There are three ſorts of Meaſures to be obſerved,

(1.) Of ſtrict Obligation? and that depends upon a clear and expreſs Declaration of God's Will; that it is a Duty incumbent on us to perform; as Creatures, or as Chriſtians; as Prayer for one, and celebrating and receiving the Lords Supper for the other.

As to theſe, ſuch Rules of Conſcience are to be obſerved,

(1.) They must be done so, as to be consistent with other Duties of Piety, Charity, Justice, Regard to Health, Families and Publick Good.

(2.) They must be done so, as to shew our Fear, and our Love of God in the doing them; *i. e.* So, as not to live in an habitual Neglect of them; nor to perform them so, as if we had no regard to him that appointed them.

(2.) There are other Measures of Zeal and Devotion; which exceed the strict Obligation of Conscience.

I do not now speak of an accidental Obligation of Conscience by particular Engagements of Oaths, or Promises, or Vows; but of what is Free and Chosen. As to which these Rules may be observed.

(1.) The more Persons are freed from Incumbrances of the World, the more time they are to set apart for the Worship, and Service of God.

(2.) The more Love any have to God and Religion, the more frequent they will be in the voluntary Service of God, and the greater Delight they will take in it. And thus much may serve to clear the Measures of true Religion.

(2.) But

(2.) But there are many Miſtakes, and falſe Notions of Religion in the World; and by reaſon of theſe, Men are very prone to exceed their due Bounds.

And here I ſhall ſet down ſome of the moſt common and popular, which are moſt apt to deceive.

(1.) That God is pleaſed with ſuch kind of Service, as doth moſt pleaſe our own Fancies. This is the Foundation of what the Scripture calls *Will-Worſhip*; *i. e.* when Men are not contented with what God hath appointed; but ſet up their own Fancies, and imagine that God will be as much pleaſed with them, as with any thing himſelf hath required. Such as the Worſhipping of Angels, and abſtaining from Meats there mentioned. If theſe had been any neceſſary parts of Religion, no doubt Chriſt and his Apoſtles would have recommended them to the Chriſtian Church; but they are far from it; and *St. Paul* very much diſlikes the introducing ſuch things, although they had ſome plauſible Pretences for them; which he calls *a ſhew of Wiſdom*. But it came at laſt to this, that ſuch a Severity in Diet, ſuch Humility in making Coloſ. 2. 23.

uſe

uſe of the Mediation of Angels, ſeemed very agreeable to the Fancies of Men; and the diſtance between God and us. And from hence they came to the Invocation of Saints, as appears from them; for their Fancies ſtill ran upon the manner of Earthly Courts, and thought things were managed in Heaven accordingly. From hence came all the groſs Superſtitions, the frequent Addreſſes, the tedious Pilgrimages in the Church of *Rome* only to procure the Favours of ſome particular Saints, to intercede with Chriſt, that he might intercede with God for them. Whereas the Scripture ſhews us the plain and direct way of making our Applications to the Father, by the Mediation and Interceſſion of his Son, whom he hath appointed the Mediator between him and us.

So gain, in the Worſhip of Images, as directly forbidden, as Adultery and Murder are in the ten Commandments; yet becauſe Men ſhew reſpect to one another, in keeping and kiſſing their Pictures, therefore God cannot be diſpleaſed with worſhipping Images, tho' againſt his Commandments, becauſe they intend it for his Honour.

This

This among others, becauſe the heats of Fancy, and Variety of Expreſſions, is pleaſing to themſelves in Prayer, they conclude it is ſo to God too. Whereas the Wiſe Man takes notice of the multiplying words in Prayer, as one of the Vanities of Mankind. *Be not raſh with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be haſty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth; therefore let thy words be few.* Eccleſ. 5. 2.

Some place too much of their Religion in a Zeal for or againſt ſome external Ceremonies of Worſhip, and both think what they do, is very pleaſing to God. Whereas at the bottom, there may be nothing but Temper and Prejudice, and Education in both ſorts. Some have a natural Averſeneſs, confirmed by their manner of breeding, to all kind of Ceremonies; and others as great an Inclination to them. But ſtill God muſt be pleaſed with what they are. As the warlike People of old worſhipped their God's in Armour; and the reſt according to the peculiar Dreſſes and Habits of their Countrey.

(2.) That God is pleaſed with what doth moſt croſs and diſpleaſe our Inclinations.

clinations. This is another Fountain of Superſtition; and ſeems contrary to the former; only they think God is more averſe to our Inclinations, than to our Fancies. It is true, our Inclinations are too much bent to what is morally Evil; and that God abhors. But that is not the thing I am ſpeaking of; but of ſuch Inclinations which have no real Evil in them; but are meerly natural, as to a Freedom from Pain and uneaſineſs. And the Point is whether God be pleaſed with ſeeing us, to vex and Torment our ſelves; and whether that be any acceptable Service to God? As to deny our ſelves natural reſt, to avoid eating a thing becauſe our Appetite is pleaſed with it; to kneel upon bare Stones; to cut our Fleſh; to whip our Bodies, &c. for they are all of the ſame kind. Can we think that God is pleaſed meerly with the torment we put our ſelves to? What Conceptions muſt we have of God then? I do not deny, but reaſon teaches us to moderate our Appetites, and not to indanger our ſenſual Inclinations to Reſt and Eaſe too much, becauſe of ill Conſequences. But there is a great deal of difference, between a moral Govern-

ment

ment of our ſelves, and making thoſe things a part of Religion, and imagining that God is pleaſed with our meer doing them. Which was the Principle, which carried the Idolaters of old to Sacrifice their Children to *Molochi* becauſe God would be beſt pleaſed with that, which was the moſt againſt their natural Inclination to do.

(3.) That God is more pleaſed with Duties of Worſhip than with moral Duties. From hence they think to make amends for the Miſcarriages of their Lives by diligence in Religious Duties. This was the Foundation of Phariſaiſm, *i. e.* of Hypocriſie, among the Jews. Their Principle was, That God valued nothing ſo much as his own immediate Service; and therefore, they took great Care about that, and what related to it; but for Juſtice and Mercy, and Charity they ſeemed to have very little regard to them; and thought God was ſo pleaſed with their Zeal for his Service, that he would eaſily paſs by other Faults. And no doubt, one of their great Quarrels againſt our Saviour, was delivering the contrary Doctrine, that God preferr'd Mercy before Sacrifice; and that Men

Men ought to be reconciled to their Brother, before they offer'd their Gift at the Altar. But ſtill Men are prone to go on in the ſame way, and to hope that ſome more than ordinary Devotion will make amends for their Sins; and then it is no wonder to ſee ſuch over devout at ſome times, who are very looſe and careleſs at others.

(4.) That God takes more notice of the Duties we perform, than of our manner of doing them. As though he rather number'd than weighed them. And no wonder, if ſuch be more frequent and diligent than others in them; they think they can never exceed therein, though they neglect ſome neceſſary Duties, as to themſelves or Families the mean time. The Service of God ought not to be neglected; for that argues a contempt of Religion; but neither ought we to neglect the Duties of our Calling, for that argues a miſ-underſtanding Religion; as though we did not Serve God when we did our Duties therein. It is no hard Matter to allot the ſeveral proportions of time to both, if Men conſider their ſeveral Obligations. For, as the Pretence of worldly Buſineſs ought not to excuſe

cuſe Men in their neglect of God's Worſhip; ſo neither ought the Pretence of God's Service, to juſtifie Men in the neglect of their Callings. God did not require of the *Jews* to be conſtant in his Temple from all parts; for then they could never have ſubſiſted; but at the ſolemn Feaſts he ſtrictly required it, and every Week, where-ever they were, they were to keep Holy the Sabbath day. Perſons that were more at leiſure, and had greater Conveniences ſpent more time in their Devotion than others. Thus *Anna* departed not from the Temple, but ſerved God therein night and day. But this was not a Matter of ſtrict Obligation to others, although it ſhewed an excellent Temper of Mind in her. But in Caſe of ſuch frequent returns of Devotion, there muſt be great Care leaſt that abate the Fervency, and what was firſt taken up for Devotion come to be a meer Cuſtom, and we flatter our ſelves that God will accept the bare Duties without the Life and Spirit of them. Luk. 2. 37.

(3.) Theſe words may be taken in a *Moral Senſe* for that *Righteouſneſs*, which reſpects other Men; and that is twofold. (1.) Of Judgment. (2.) Of Practice.

(1.) Of

(1.) Of *Judgment*, concerning the *Actions* and *Designs* of others; *i. e.* be not too ready to cenſure, and condemn them; *why ſhouldſt thou deſtroy thy ſelf. i. e.* Why ſhouldſt thou bring the ſame Severity upon thy ſelf, which thou uſeſt towards others; according to that of our Saviour, *Judge not that ye be not judged*, &c.

Matth. 7. 1, 2.

Two things to be ſpoken to, for clearing this Point;

(1.) How Men are *too Righteous* in this Matter?

(2.) What *Miſchief* this brings upon them.

(1.) How Men are *Righteous overmuch* in this Matter?

(1.) Not in paſſing a true Judgment upon the Actions of others. For to do otherwiſe proceeds from want of Judgment, and Righteouſneſs. Of Judgment, if we do not ſee the difference of Good and Evil: Of Righteouſneſs, if we will not. As far as we are concerned, we are not to ſuffer our Paſſions to blind our Judgments; not to think that to be a Vertue in one, which we ſhould account a Vice in another; nor to call that an Infirmity in one, which we ſhould judge to be Wilfulneſs, and Preſumption in another. (2.) Not

(2.) Not in keeping our ſelves from being deceived by the falſe Pretences of others. It is poſſible for Men to make uſe of this very Saying, to abuſe the Credulity of well meaning Perſons; and to account the diſcerning of Spirits, as far as it lies within our reach, to be aſſuming too great a Power of Judging. But our Saviour thought it not inconſiſtent with his Precept of not Judging, to expoſe the Hypocriſie of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*; but then, he certainly knew it to be Hypocriſie in them. And as far, as we are certain by the Rules which he hath given us, we may do the ſame thing.

But wherein then lies being *Righteous overmuch?*

(1.) In not making allowance for the common Infirmities of Mankind; which do not only conſiſt in the Imperfections of good Actions, but in ſuch Failings, which human Nature is ſubject to in this State; notwithſtanding our greateſt Care to avoid them. If Perſons will be ſevere upon others, for ſuch things as theſe are, and condemn all Religion as meer Shew and Hypocriſie in them on that account; this is being *Righteous overmuch.* For, they

do not make the ſame allowance which God doth; and without which it were a vain thing to hope for Salvation. For, if God ſhould be ſo exact to mark what is done amiſs by us, who can ſtand before him? And if we expect ſuch an allowance to be made to our ſelves, what reaſon have we not to make it to others? At leaſt ſo far, as not to condemn them for want of Sincerity in the main, becauſe of ſome ſuch Infirmities. How can we righteouſly judge them, whom God will not judge? We muſt in judging others make allowance for the Weakneſs of Judgment and Strength of Paſſion, which we find often accompanied with a real Tenderneſs of Conſcience. I confeſs it is very hard to believe, where we ſee a great appearance of Spiritual Pride, a neglect of moral Duties, Cenſoriouſneſs towards others, Impatience of Contradiction, *&c.* that there is a real Tenderneſs of Conſcience joyned with them. But yet ſome have ſtronger Convictions of ſome Duties than they have of others, and if they did Act againſt their Conſciences in thoſe Matters, they ſhould reſiſt that which they account the cleareſt light they have; and

and in ſo doing they muſt caſt off the immediate Guidance of their Conſciences, which might have very bad Effects, as to the Force and Power of Concience in other things. I am afraid many do not impartially weigh and conſider things as they ought; but when, or where did the Generality of Mankind do ſo? he thinks ſuch Scruples are weak, and ought to be laid aſide; but they ſay, they cannot overcome them; and they have prayed and ſearched, and uſed the beſt means and cannot be ſatisfied; and what can they now do?

Conſcience is really a nice and tender thing, and ought not to be handled roughly and ſeverely; conſidering how unaccountable ſometimes to others, the real Scruples of ſome Conſciences are. Although Conſcience be a Man's Judgment in order to Practice, yet there may be a great ſtrictneſs of Conſcience, where there is no ſtrictneſs of Judgment; and Conſcience in ſome Caſes is more nice for want of Judgment. But what then? muſt we condemn all thoſe who labour under that Diſtemper? And that you count want of Judgment in him, he may

look on as want of Sincerity in you.

We have been ſo long cenſuring and condemning each other for ſuch things, that God ſeems by his wiſe Providence, to bring the Plea of Scruples of Conſcience round, that we may learn more Tenderneſs to each other. By which we ſee that ſome may really ſcruple that which others wonder at, and that Mens Conſciences are not to be meaſur'd by the ſame Light; for that is a Matter of Admiration to one, which is of Scruple to another.

The beſt uſe we can make of this, is, to pity the Infirmities of Mankind, and of thoſe moſt, who are under the Conduct of a miſ-guided Conſcience, becauſe whatever the Action be their Deſign and Intention is honeſt and good.

(2.) In putting the worſt Conſtruction upon Mens Actions, which is directly contrary to that Charity St. *Paul* ſo much commends; for that not only bears the worſt, and hopes for the beſt, but where a thing is capable of being made better by a favourable Senſe, it is ready to give it. Now, there are many things Men do, which are accounted good or evil, according to the Intention of the doer of them. I do not

1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, &c.

ſay,

ſay, That alters the Nature of the Action in it ſelf; for what God commands is Good, and what he forbids is Evil, whatever Mens Intentions be; but although a good Intention cannot make a bad Action good; yet a bad Intention may make a good Action evil; not in it ſelf, but to him that doth it.

And ſo there are two ways Men may exceed in judging;

(1.) In making no Abatement in an evil Action as to the Perſon, for the goodneſs of his Intention. For, altho' the Action be not good by it, yet it is ſo much leſs evil; and in doubtful Caſes it takes much from the Guilt, although not where the Command is plain; as in the Caſe of *Saul*.

(2.) In charging Perſons with a bad Intention in a good Action, where there is no plain Evidence; for then, it is but Suſpicion, and an uncharitable Judgment. Our Saviour might juſtly charge the *Phariſees* with this, as to their Alms and Prayers, becauſe he knew their Hearts. They laid them open enough to others, by their Affectation; and where that is groſs and notorious, it were weakneſs, and not charity to judge otherwiſe. But where

we have no ground for it, to judge Men to Act upon bad Principles, is being *Righteous overmuch*, or rather being *unrighteous* and *uncharitable*.

(3.) In judging Mens Condition towards God, from ſome particular Actions, although contrary to the general Courſe of them. Think with your ſelves, what ſtrange and miſtaken Judgments you ſhould have paſt upon *David* and *Ahab*; if you had been privy to the Adultery, and Murder of the one, and had ſeen the Humiliation of the other. If you had ſeen *Ahab* in his Mortification, when he faſted and put
1 Kin. 21. 27. on Sackcloth and humbled himſelf, you would have thought him a Saint; for he ſeemed to have been in good earneſt for the time. And if you had judged of *David* by thoſe particular Actions, you muſt have concluded him a very bad Man; but both theſe Concluſions had been falſe; becauſe taken up upon too ſlight, and narrow an Inſpection. The ſame Caſe had been as to St. *Peter's* denial, and the Repentance of *Judas*. We muſt not form our Judgments of others, by ſingle and ſudden Actions, which Perſons may fall into by Surprize, or ſudden Accidents, and conclude all the reſt

reſt to be like; but we are to ſuſpend our thoughts for the preſent, and to weigh and compare the Courſe of a Man's Actions together. For, ſo God will judge Mankind; and ſo ought we to judge of one another.

(4.) In judging of Mens ſpiritual Eſtate from outward Afflictions, which befall them. Thus *Job*'s Friends were righteous overmuch, when they charged him ſo deep with Hypocriſie, becauſe his Calamities were extraordinary. It is natural for ſuch, who believe Providence to interpret God's Actions towards Men, are either as Marks of his Approbation or Diſpleaſure. But God hath no where declared ſo much, and we have no Reaſon to paſs ſuch a Judgment on Men; ſince the wiſe Man ſaith, *No Man can know Love or Hatred, by the things which are before him.* Ch. 9. 1. And *there is a juſt Man who periſheth in his Righteouſneſs, and a wicked Man, that prolongeth his Life in his Wickedneſs.* 7, 15. If ſuch had ſeen a juſt Man ſuffering to ſuch a Degree, they muſt have inferr'd, that he was Guilty of ſome ſecret Wickedneſs, which made God deal ſo hardly with him; but the wiſe Man ſaith, this was to *be Righteous overmuch;*

for God is not to Act according to our Measures. He knows what is best, and fittest for Men to undergo; and he never Acts so, as they shall have Cause to complain at last. *There is a just Man to whom it happeneth, according to the work of the Wicked; and there is a wicked Man, unto whom it happeneth, according to the work of the Righteous.* Eccl. 8. 14. Therefore it is very unrighteous for us to pronounce any wicked, meerly because they undergo greater Sufferings, and more pinching Calamities than others. There is no judging a Child to be out of his Fathers Love, because he corrects him for his Faults; as long as there is hopes of Amendment he will do it; and when there is none, he lets him alone to take his Course, but he is then more displeased than ever.

(5.) In judging too easily concerning the Faults and Mis-carriages of others. Men shew their severity to others, and partiality to themselves this way; they think themselves hardly dealt with, to be censur'd upon vain and idle Reports; and yet they are too apt to do the same thing by others: There is a Justice, we ought to shew to the Reputation of others; which lies here

here in doing as we think reaſonable, as others ſhould do by us. Some cannot think ſo well of themſelves, unleſs they think amiſs of others; and ſuch are very prying into the Faults of other Men, and are pleaſed with hearing them; becauſe hereby they bring them on the ſame Level with themſelves. What a Satisfaction doth it ſeem to profane Men, to find out the Miſcarriages of ſuch, who pretend to Religion? But are they the better, or Religion the worſe for them? To be a Scandal to Religion, is a great Aggravation of a Fault; but ſtill Religion is not to blame; for it was the want of it, which made them commit thoſe Faults; but where there is a deſire to hear the Miſcarriages of other Men, and a Pleaſure in relating them; no doubt there is an ill Temper of Mind, from whence this proceeds.

(6.) In not uſing the ſame Meaſures, in judging the good and the evil of other Men. The one they preſently and eaſily believe; but the other they make many Difficulties about. If any evil Action be reported of a Neighbour, that is preſently entertained and ſpread abroad to his mighty diſadvantage

tage; although it be at first taken up from a malicious, or ill grounded Report. But if a good Action be told, they find out all possible ways, either to lessen the Credit of the Reporter, or the Nature of the Action, or to find out Circumstances to exasperate it. So much Malice and ill Will doth appear, in the ordinary Considerations of Mankind, and the Judgments they pass upon one another.

(7.) In pronouncing concerning Mens final State in another World. Which is wholly out of our reach and Capacity. For that depends upon such things, which it is impossible for us to know, as

(1.) The Nature and Aggravation of Mens Sins; which depend upon Circumstances we cannot know, but God doth. What measure of Knowledge they had; what Temptations they were under; what means of Resistance; what Degrees of Wilfulness and Presumption there were in them.

(2.) The Sincerity of their Repentance for those Sins. We know, it may be, the Sins they have committed; but we cannot know, how much they have smarted for those Sins in secret; what Agonies of Mind they have under-

undergone for them; how earneſtly they have pray'd for Forgiveneſs, and Strength againſt them; what an inward Abhorrence and Deteſtation they have of them; what a real Change hath been made in their Souls, as to what they have loved and delighted in.

(3.) What Failings are conſiſtent with a general Sincerity. We know a perfect Obedience is impoſſible; therefore we muſt allow ſome, or elſe we muſt ſend all to Hell. But then, how to fix the nature and number of ſuch Failings, ſo, as to ſay, So far he may fail, and yet be ſincere is impoſſible for us to do; ſince we muſt take in thoſe Circumſtances, which it is impoſſible for us to know.

(4.) What things are abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, of particular Perſons. Bold and preſumptuous Men are very poſitive and daring in ſuch Caſes; but ſuch as are modeſt and humble dare not go farther than God hath declared. Some unreaſonably reſtrain the Poſſibility of Salvation, to the Bounds of their own Communion; but I ſhould ſooner queſtion the Poſſibility of their Salvation, who thus cenſure and condemn the reſt of Mankind. Which is not conſiſtent

ſiſtent with that Charity, which the Scripture makes more neceſſary to Salvation, than any one Communion.

(5.) The Bounds of God's Mercy. The uſual Terms of it are expreſſed in Scripture: But even that hath acquainted us, that God hath not tied up himſelf from ſome extraordinary Inſtances of it. As in the Caſe of the Thief on the Croſs. This is no ground for Incouragement to any to put off their Repentance, but it is a ſufficient ground to keep us from cenſuring any, as to their final Condition in another World.

(2.) The Miſchief they bring upon themſelves, by being thus ſevere towards others.

(1.) This provokes the Malice of others againſt them; who are ſure to be revenged, if poſſible, on ſuch who are ſo ready to condemn others; and to lay open their Faults, thereby to expoſe their Weakneſs or Hypocriſie. Whereas Candour and Fairneſs, makes Men willing to uſe the ſame towards thoſe who uſe it to others.

(2.) It provokes God to be ſevere to ſuch as ſhew no Mercy towards others. And ſo our Saviour underſtands it: *Matth.* 7. 1, 2. Nothing we have ſo much

much Cauſe to dread, as the Severity of God's Judgment upon us; and nothing ſhould make us more willing to ſhew Kindneſs and Good-Will to others, than to conſider that God will have a regard to it in his dealing with us. Eſpecially, if it appear in our Actions, as well as our Words. Which is the next thing to be conſidered,

(2.) We may be *Righteous overmuch* in the moral Practice of Righteouſneſs towards others.

(1.) That Men may exceed herein.

(2.) That this proves miſchievous to themſelves.

(1.) That Men may exceed in Righteouſneſs in their dealings with other Men.

In the Matter of right and wrong, between Party and Party, Men may be *Righteous overmuch*, *viz.* When Men take all the advantages which the Law gives them againſt others, without Conſideration of their Condition and Circumſtances. It hath been long ſince obſerved, That *Summum jus ſumma injuria*; the Reaſon whereof is, That the Law being made for a whole Community cannot be ſo framed, but it may pinch hard upon ſome particular

cular Persons if it be severely pursued; whose Circumstances are such, as the Law never intended. *The Foundations of Justice*, saith *Cicero*, *are that no innocent Person suffer, and that the common Good be maintained.* Where the Circumstances of Persons deserve Pity; it is not Justice, but Inhumanity to pursue their own Right to the ruin of others. No certain Rules can be set down, because Circumstances vary so much, but it doth not become a good Man, to insist upon a bare Right to the utter ruin of another; if they are such as deserve Commiseration, *i. e.* Poor, helpless and willing to do what they are able for Satisfaction. *Aristotle* saith, *That a good Man doth not pursue the* ἀκριβὸ δίκαιον, *the exactness of Law*; but abates of his Right, although he is sure he hath the Law of his side.

Of. l. 10.

Eth. l. 5. 10.

Is it then unbecoming a good Man to pursue his Right? No. But he ought so to manage it, as to shew he hath a regard to Equity as well as Justice.

But there are several ways of Mens being *Righteous overmuch.*

(1.) When they mind Justice without

out Mercy. The truth is, ſuch Perſons are not ſo much as moral Heathens; ſo far are they from being good Chriſtians. Which ſo earneſtly recommends Charity and Kindneſs to our greateſt Enemies. So that even our Juſtice ought to have a mixture of Mercy in it.

(2.) When they make the Law the Inſtrument of their Revenge; when they are glad they have taken their Enemies at ſuch an advantage. We may here apply St. *Paul's* words, *We know the Law is good, if a Man uſe it lawfully.* But there may be a very unlawful uſe of it, when it is made to ſerve Mens Paſſions againſt each other. 1 Tim. 1. 8.

(3.) When they ſeek for no Accommodation of their Differences in a fair and amicable manner. The Neceſſities of ſome Caſes are ſuch, That they are fit to be referr'd to ſuch Wiſe Arbitration as the Law provides; but if Men are reſtleſs and litigious, who love Differences, and delight in vexing their Neighbours with Law Suits, it is certain they have not the Spirit and Temper of Chriſtians, who are to live peaceably with all Men.

(2.) How

(2.) How this proves so mischievous to Men.

(1.) It makes such Mens lives very unquiet, and troublesome to themselves and others. For it is impossible for some to disturb others, but they must expect a Retaliation. Many Men would have their Passions lie more quiet, if they were not rouzed up and awakened by others; but when they are, they know not how to lay them asleep again. And so they exasperate and provoke each other, and take away all the Peace and Contentment of one anothers Lives. And what Care and Solitude, what Vexation and Trouble doth attend those, who are thus *Righteous overmuch*, that they will always be endeavouring to right themselves, till they bring the greatest mischief upon themselves?

(2.) It provokes God to shorten their days out of pity to the rest of the World. For the greatest Blessings of this World, are promised to the meek and patient, and charitable, and merciful Persons; and therefore, others have no reason to expect any other but a Curse upon them.

To

To conclude all by way of Advice, as to the general Senſe of theſe words;

(1.) Not to think every thing too much, in Religion and Vertue, becauſe ſome are here ſaid to be *Righteous overmuch.* The far greateſt Part of Mankind err the other way. They care not how little of Religion they have; and they deſire no more than juſt to carry them to Heaven. Which ſhews, they neither know, what Heaven or Religion means; for then they would be convinced, their Minds could never be too much prepared for it.

(2.) To underſtand the difference between true Wiſdom, and Righteouſneſs, and that which is not. For, upon that depends the juſt Meaſure of them both. We cannot be too Wiſe in that which is real Wiſdom, but we may be too eaſily conceited of our Wiſdom, and cry up that for Righteouſneſs which is not, but a ſort of buſie Impertinency about little Matters in Religion, and making a great noiſe about them, which ſignifie very little as to true Wiſdom.

(3.) Be not too curious in ſearching, nor too hard in cenſuring the Faults of

others. It is a very unpleasant Curiosity to find out the Faults of others; like that of some Creatures, which delight in Dunghils; and those who consider the Frailties of human Nature, will not be too severe upon the Miscarriages of others.

(4.) Live as easily with others as you can, for that tends much to the sweetning and prolonging Life. It is not possible to live without Injuries; take as little notice of them as may be; and that may be the smartest Revenge. If you are forced to right your selves, do it with that Gentleness and Fairness, that they may see you delight not in it.

(5.) Avoid a needless Scrupulosity of Conscience, as a thing which keeps our Minds always uneasie. A Scrupulous Man is always in the dark, and therefore full of Fears and Melancholy apprehensions; he that gives way to Scruples, is the greatest Enemy to his own Peace. But then let not the fear of Scrupulosity make you afraid, of keeping a good Conscience; for that is the wisest, and best, and safest Companion in the World.

F I N I S.

Books written by the Right Reverend Father in God, Edw. *L. Bishop of* Worcester, *and sold by* H. Mortlock *at the* Phœnix *in St.* Paul's *Church-Yard.*

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